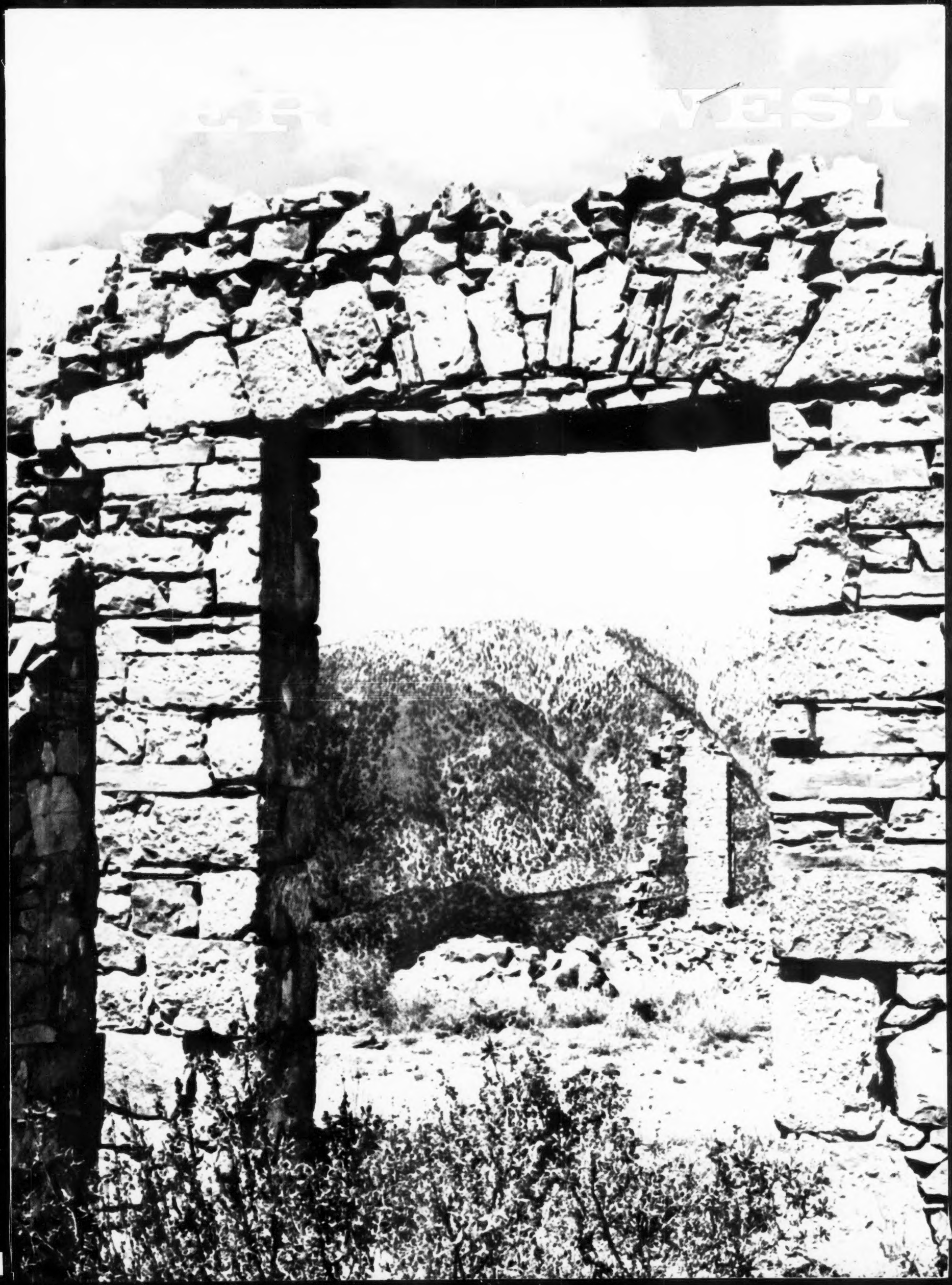

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Cover: Perched at the unlikely altitude of 8,700 feet in the White Pine Range of east-central Nevada, Treasure City in its heyday between 1868 and 1870 boasted a deep-breathing population of more than 7,000. Like most other mining boomtowns, however, Treasure City soon strangled on borrasca, and today little is left of it but some crumbling stone ruins — annotations for the history of western mining. For more on the subject of vanished towns, see "Taken by the Wind" by Stanley Paher on page 9 of this issue (photograph by Frank Mitrani).

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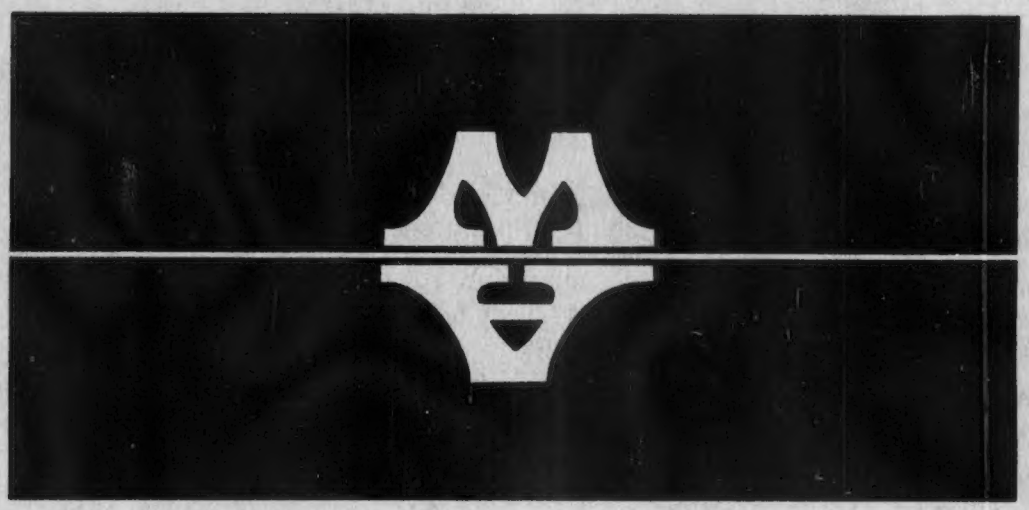

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Stone wall in Treasure City, Nevada (Frank Mitrani photograph).

XUM

By Carey McWilliams –

A Man, a Place, and a Time

THE CAREER of John Steinbeck suggests the existence of a special literary providence. For he was the right man, at the right place, at the right time. As a man, he had robust interests and concerns; he looked outward on life; he was not, one might say, the literary type. He spent much of his life out-of-doors and knocked around a good deal. Most of his vacations from boyhood to early manhood were spent as a ranch hand, working on ranches up and down the Salinas Valley. He worked on road gangs, in fish hatcheries, in sugar beet factories, as a day-laborer in New York, and as a caretaker for a lodge at Lake Tahoe where he wrote his first novel. As a writer he knew what he needed to know—having spent five years at Stanford —but he got his themes from the life he knew and not from books he had read. He had deep roots in California and was obsessed, throughout his life, by the dramatic and haunting beauty of the state. He was a shrewd, sensitive, and accurate observer "of mice and men," of clouds, mountains, mists, of birds, dogs, roosters, ponies, turtles, weasels, snakes, bats, gophers, buzzards, insects and burros. He had real understanding and affection for tatterdemalion types—bums, bindle stiffs, ranch hands—and the floaters and drifters to be found in the skid rows of Salinas and the San Joaquin Valley towns.

Being the outward-oriented person he was, Steinbeck readily absorbed the spirit of the times. In 1936 he wrote a letter to the student magazine at Berkeley in which he said of the young writers of the period, "The very frightened use the academy, research into one kind of microscopic detail or another or bury themselves in some old time and its equipment, feeling safe because that time is over. Others are like the man who approved of revolutions that happened at least a hundred years ago. Others a little closer to the surface create and dive into systems as complete and beautiful and effective as that of St. Thomas. . . . The ones capable of using their eyes and ears, capable of feeling the beat of the time, are frantic with material, while those who use the escapes into technique and definitions, into all the precious tricks that have separated art from life, will not hear anyway." As a writer, he met his own definition of relevance. He had good eyes and ears, he worked close to the surface, and he was capable of feeling the beat of the time. He possessed, in a word, qualities needed to carry out the assignment which a special literary providence had designed for him—or was he, perhaps, designed for it?

For the fulfillment of this assignment, Steinbeck was born in the right place at the right time. The time was 1902, which meant that he reached maturity at the midpoint of the 1930s. The place was Salinas, the county seat of Monterey, near the ocean end of the long valley, a pivotal community in the history of migratory farm labor in California. The family, by California standards, had deep roots in the community; the father, a flour mill owner, had served as treasurer of the county, and the mother had taught in a little red-painted school at Big Sur. Literary critic Peter Shaw has suggested that Steinbeck's great theme was the relationship between man and his environment. Throughout California, and notably in the Steinbeck country, this relationship assumes dramatic, sharply contrasting, and often novel forms. Monterey and Salinas are not far apart and yet, in many respects, are separate worlds. Steinbeck was a denizen of both. There is a preposterous beauty about Big Sur, Carmel, Monterey, and the Carmel Valley. The Pacific, with its "sad, red splendid sunsets," is close by, often in full view, and its sounds and mists infuse the small interior valleys and travel up the steep slopes of the Coast Range. But the terrain of the Salinas Valley is harsh and forbidding; it has a beauty of its own, but it is not of the picture postcard variety. The Salinas River, which flows a hundred and fifty miles in a generally northwesterly direction and empties into the sea near Monterey, has been known to flood, but the valley is dry most of the time. The weather is hot in summer and in winter the cold can be penetrating when the rains come and fogs roll in. The black soils around the town of Salinas and between Salinas and Monterey are extremely productive. But it took water, technology, and enormous human effort to convert this part of the valley into the "salad bowl" of California. Monterey, with its romantic history and superb scenery, has always attracted tourists, artists, the well-to-do, and assorted loafers and idlers.

John Steinbeck and the long agony of the Great Valley in an age of depression, oppression, frustration, and hope.

But Salinas is, and always has been, a no-nonsense, tough town. For years the American Legion referred to it as the most patriotic community in California, meaning that the local shipper-growers were always the first to pass out the ax and pick handles and start the rough stuff whenever strikes impended. It has been the scene of some of the bloodiest—and surely the noisiest—battles in the long and strife-torn history of farm labor in California, notably the Salinas lettuce strike of 1936.

In the middle 1930s I came across a strange sight on the outskirts of Salinas, namely a most efficiently equipped concentration camp protected by barbed wire fencing, strong gates, and sentry posts or towers. It was located at a discreet distance from the town, out of full view of the main highway. The shipper-growers said it had been built just in case it might be necessary to protect nonstriking farm workers from the fury of pickets and the propaganda of "outside agitators." Actually it was built as a kind of outdoor detention center or stockade, should it become necessary to make mass arrests of striking farm workers. One might say the camp symbolizes the prevailing model of labor relations in shipper-grower circles in Salinas.

The shipper-growers of California, the men who own, control, and direct the state's fantastically rich produce industry, are a strange breed, one that must be studied at close range over a period of years to be fully appreciated. It is a breed long addicted to violence—of speech, mostly, but on occasion rhetoric has found expression in action. Over the years, Salinas has produced some of the more flamboyant specimens of the breed. They are able, hard-working, resourceful men and once you get to know them individually—once the shouting abates—they are not a bad lot. However, in the area of labor relations they are spoiled, stupid, and arrogant. Until fairly recent years, they or their predecessors have had such undisputed airtight control of local and state authorities that what they want they get, as by a kind of divine right. In fairness it should be noted that they farm for huge stakes; in fact, it would be more accurate to say that they mine the soil rather than farm it. In Salinas, lettuce, quite appropriately, is known as "green gold." A shipper-grower might have an enormous investment in a crop grown on what may appear to be a small acreage. Gambling is the name of the game, and most shipper-growers are inveterate gamblers. They gamble on crops, on being able to get a particular crop to a particular eastern produce market at a particular time; naturally they do not relish work stoppages or strikes. At the height of the season, a kind of mining-town gambling mania prevails in the towns, in the fields, in the labor camps—that is, if all goes well, and if there are no strikes.

Steinbeck was equally at home in Salinas with its lettuce sheds and icing plants, and Monterey with its fish canneries and wharves. He also knew the Coast Range and its valleys. But he never had much to say about San Francisco and virtually nothing, that I can recall, about Los Angeles or Southern California. But the parts of the state he knew, he knew very well indeed. For a writer preoccupied with the relationship between man and environment, almost any part of California, carefully studied, has much to offer. It is a state of excess and exuberance, of sharp contrasts and startling discontinuities. California has always had a set of fascinating social and cultural dynamics. It demands attention; it invites study. For these reasons, it has been a good school for writers, certainly for those writers who have responded to its special qualities.

Henry George and Bret Harte were first-generation Californians, although both were born elsewhere. Frank Norris and John Steinbeck were second-generation Californians (although Norris was born in the East). The identification of these four writers with the state has not been fortuitous; all of them were profoundly influenced by their exposure—and response—to certain qualities of the social environment. The best of Steinbeck was written before he left California in the late 1940s to settle in New York; *East of Eden* (1952) and *The Wayward Bus* (1947) are California seen from a distance, with nostalgia. But more was involved, of course, than the shift in residence; in the East his wealth and prominence made him a part of the Establishment. In California he was never a member of the Establishment—it has always been

XUM

Conspirator:

Carey McWilliams

Carey McWilliams, one of the best informed writers on the subject of California and the West, was born in 1905 on a cattle ranch near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, son of a pioneer cattleman and a schoolteacher. He graduated from law school at the University of Southern California in 1927.

His abiding interest in the social problems of minority groups, ranging from racial to migratory, began more than three decades ago when he left his law career to become California's chief of the Division of Immigration and Housing, a position in which he was directly concerned with migratory farm labor camps.

In 1939 his *Factories in the Field,* appearing a few months after Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath,* focused public attention on migratory workers in California—and inspired a charge of "conspiracy" from outraged agri-industrialists. In *Ill Fares the Land* (1942) he extended his study of migratory workers to all parts of the United States. In these and later books he wrote with passionate indignation about the persecution of racial and social minority groups, producing an impressive body of work: *Brothers Under the Skin* (1943), *Prejudice* (1944), *A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America* (1948), *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1949), and *Witch Hunt: The Revival of Heresy* (1950).

His more general works have established him as one of the most perceptive historians and social critics among American writers today; they include *Southern California Country* (1946), *The California Revolution* (edited with an introduction, 1968), and the long-since classic study of the California experience, *Calfornia: The Great Exception* (1949). In 1945, he became a contributing editor of *The Nation* magazine, and currently is its editor.

Carey McWilliams in 1939.

rather difficult to find an Establishment in California—and for most of his years there he was not a man of wealth. Perhaps he was lucky to leave California when he did; one of the valleys he loved is now part of a military reservation. When he returned to California on a visit in 1962, he was saddened, as well he might be, by the sight of the spoliation and havoc that the Joads and other more recent migrants had managed to wreak in scarcely more than a decade. Even so it was appropriate that his ashes were returned to Salinas for burial, for that is where they belong. On that occasion someone should have read, but probably didn't, some lines from Malcolm Cowley's poem "The Urn," which might well have been written of Steinbeck:

. . . We carry
each of us an urn of native soil,
of not impalpable dust a double handful . . .
—a parcel of the soil not wide enough
or firm enough to build a dwelling on
or deep enough to dig a grave, but cool
and sweet enough to sink the nostrils in
and find the smell of home, or in the ears
rumors of home like oceans in a shell.

So much, then for the setting and the man. But the timing was also providential. Steinbeck was in his middle thirties at the midpoint of the decade that he referred to as the "terrible, troubled, triumphant, surging Thirties," the decade that provided him, as Lawrence Clark Powell puts it, with "theme, sinew and song." *Cup of Gold,* an apprentice work on a romantic theme, was published in 1929, the year the 1920s, as someone said, were "snuffed out." Thereafter Steinbeck was not intrigued by such subjects as Morgan the Pirate, for by then another Morgan, who was also a pirate, was very much in the news. And by then, he was, in his own phrase, feeling "the beat of the time" and was "frantic with material."

The big years of the dust bowl migration, which provided Steinbeck with the theme for *The Grapes of Wrath,* coincided with his emergence from apprenticeship status as a writer. He was thirty-seven when the novel was published. The migration was, of course, a modern day reenactment of a familiar theme, the forced exodus of an oppressed people from their farms and homes and their flight to a distant Promised Land. The structure of the novel has its roots in the Old Testament, which perhaps accounts for its messianic tone and quality. But the dust bowl migration was also a reenactment of the great American cycle of movement to the West. So there was a double resonance and reference to the story. The fact that the theme was familiar and the story line was so clear no doubt made it easier for Steinbeck to write the novel as the drama unfolded. Even so it is important to remember that the action was crowded into a brief span of years; it was in-

tensely dramatic and brilliantly illuminated, but it ended almost before it began. With World War II, the Joads seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. For all its great qualities, therefore, their story might have gone unrecorded had Steinbeck not been where he was, who he was, and what he was at the time the action occurred.

One aspect of the theme of *The Grapes of Wrath* has been largely ignored. At the time, the dust bowl migration seemed to mark a climactic moment in the century-old saga of migratory farm labor in California. A vacuum of a sort had been created in the farm labor market after 1929. Markets for farm products had been drastically curtailed, prices had fallen, and the outlook was bleak. As might be expected, many communities, particularly the cities in which they lived in the off-season, began to clamor for the ousting of the Mexicans as a means of reducing the relief burden. The large employers of farm labor had their own reasons for getting rid of the Mexicanos, since they had staged some of the first big labor strikes of the 1930s—strikes which had occurred before the dust bowl migration began to assume significant proportions. The growers, in other words, thought that it might be a good idea to reduce their dependence on Mexican labor, which had become a good deal less than docile. In *The American Mercury* for July, 1933, I reported how the Mexicans, men, women, and children, were being deported from Los Angeles by the thousand-lot, in special deportation trains, as one might ship cattle from one point to another. In short the Mexicans were being eased out of California, in large numbers, at about the same time that the dust bowl migrants were being pushed off the land.

Drought first struck the Great Plains in 1930. Conditions were worse in 1931, and improved slightly in 1932 and 1933, but the dust clouds cast shadows dark as night in 1934 and 1935. If you are a farmer and you are forced off the land in Oklahoma and you look West, you see nothing but mountains and desert until, way off in the distance, you see or imagine you see, California, the Promised Land. So by 1934 the farm labor force, for the first time in history, was made up, in about equal parts, of aliens and native-born Americans—that is, dust bowl migrants. It seemed, therefore, that with the arrival of the Joads, the jig was up for the big growers. The growers would no longer be able to exploit a seemingly endless stream of alien farm workers recruited from distant places: Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Filipinos, Portuguese, and Mexicans, not to mention Indians and other outcast groups. By implication it also seemed logical to conclude that, at long last, a major transformation might take place in the social structure of California agriculture, in order to absorb the migrants from the Great Plains. In a word, the historical cycle of migration to the West coincided with what appeared to be the end of a cycle in the history of migratory farm labor.

Steinbeck was well aware of this aspect of the dust bowl migration. *The Nation,* in its issue of September 12, 1936, carried an article by him entitled "Dubious Battle in Cali-

Conspirator:

John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, in 1902, the son of the county treasurer and a teacher. After four years at Stanford University studying science and marine biology, he began to write, producing his first novel, *Cup of Gold,* in 1929. It sold poorly, and to support himself while writing, he labored with all kinds of people at almost everything—as an apprentice hod carrier, fruit picker, chemist, caretaker, reporter, surveyor, and painter—gaining the direct experience of the worker's life and problems reflected in some of his most successful later books.

Several of his early works of social comment examined the oppression of the field hand, including *In Dubious Battle* (1936) and *Of Mice and Men* (1937). By far the most powerful, however, was *The Grapes of Wrath,* called the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the twentieth century; it appeared in 1939 and was quickly banned from many California schools and libraries. A few months after its appearance, it was followed by Carey McWilliam's *Factories in the Field;* the combination sharpened public awareness of the plight of migrant workers in the West and brought cries of "conspiracy" from outraged landowners. *The Grapes of Wrath* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940.

Perhaps most reflective of his feeling for the land and men of the land were *Pastures of Heaven* (1932), *To a God Unknown* (1933) and *The Long Valley* (1938). Although he continued to write until his death in 1968, Steinbeck's later works—including *East of Eden* (1952) and *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961) were considered less successful by critics than earlier efforts. Nevertheless, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, and one reviewer observed that almost alone among writers of his generation Steinbeck had given "permanent aesthetic values to the materials of the Great Depression."

John Steinbeck in 1939.

fornia." According to Lawrence Clark Powell, it was Steinbeck's first published article and probably the first magazine article he had written. He begins by saying that the dust bowl migration began in 1934. So it did if one is thinking of large numbers; but the migration can be traced back to the early 1920s, when long staple cotton began to be grown in the San Joaquin Valley by cotton growers, many of whom had migrated westward from Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. These men, the rich uncles of the Joads, had come to think of themselves as native Californians by the middle 1930s and did not much care to be identified with Okies and Arkies. As more cotton was planted, more sharecroppers and tenants, who knew how to pick and chop cotton, began to move West. What began as a trickle in the 1920s turned into a flood in the mid-1930s, when drought struck the Great Plains. In this *Nation* article, Steinbeck pointed out the ways in which the dust bowl migrants differed from all previous elements that had made up the farm labor pool. Unlike the groups they replaced, these latest migratory farm workers were American citizens. They could not be deported or threatened with deportation. Moreover they were white, Protestant—just painfully Protestant—and of ancient Anglo-Saxon lineage. This was a dual embarrassment, first because the migrants, as primitive WASPS, should have been accepted with open arms by the established WASPS—but of course they weren't; and second, because the growers had long contended that only persons of a dark skin were willing, and able, to perform stoop-labor operations in the sun-drenched fields of the San Joaquin Valley. Also the new migrants had not been drawn from a peon class but had either owned small farms or been farm tenants or farm hands, in the American sense, where the farm hand was regarded as a member of the farm familiy, and could and often did marry the farmer's daughter. In a word, these latest migrants were notably independent-minded yeoman farmers, not at all used to being kicked around or told what to do. Unlike earlier farm labor recruits, the Joads constituted a family migration. They came not for the season but to settle down and stay forever. They brought their possessions, such as they were. The Joads were not the kinds of farm workers the growers had traditionally sought nor were they prepared for an influx of this magnitude. And to make matters worse, the new migrants, caught up to some extent in the spirit of the 1930s, soon began to strike and demand higher wages.

"The effect," Steinbeck wrote, "has been far from that desired. There is now in California anger instead of fear. The stupidity of the large growers has changed terror into defensive fury. . . . The large growers . . . are devoting their money to tear gas and rifle ammunition. . . . There is tension in the Valley, and fear for the future." At a later date Steinbeck was accused of having said that the growers had set the dust bowl migration in motion by recruiting farm labor in the drought areas. But he made it quite clear in this *Nation* article that the Joads had not been lured to California by the promise of good wages but were refugees "as surely as though they had fled from destruction by an invader." Once the tide was set in motion, it could not be reversed, because there was not much to which, at that time, the migrants could return. For this reason Steinbeck expressed the hope, as many of us did at the time, that the Joads would eventually be accepted in good grace and permitted to make a new life for themselves in California. But he also recognized that "in the end" this just might not happen and the Joads might become "avengers of the hundreds of thousands who had been tortured and starved before them"—a rather overheated reference to the nameless thousands who, over the years, had followed the crops.

And it did look, for a time, as though a major confrontation was about to take place. The Joads were certainly not welcomed with open arms. As the migration began to gather momentum, strenuous efforts were made to check or deflect it. At that time we had a handsome, daring chief of Police in Los Angeles who had no great respect for the Constitution. So he sent a detachment of Los Angeles police to the Arizona border in a vain effort to turn back the migrants. Similar stratagems were employed but none of them worked. Once the Joads got past the patrols and border guards and descended into the San Joaquin Valley, they quickly encountered the hostility of "old time" Californian migrants who had arrived in the 1902s. Strong pressures were exerted to keep them at an appropriate social distance from the established settlements, in effect to segregate them from the rest of the population. Migrants were forced to improvise settlements on the outskirts of towns, in the unincorporated areas. Modesto, for example, had a community known as Little Arkansas on one side of a canal bank and one known as Little Oklahoma on the other. I discovered that all or most of the families on certain streets in Little Oklahoma were from the same county or small town in Oklahoma. Some of these settlements were good-sized communities; in 1933 the population of East Salinas, a community of this sort, was about 6,500. The established towns and cities strenuously resisted petitions to extend roads, sewers and other facilities to the satellite migrant settlements and regarded annexation as unthinkable. In such a setting it is not surprising that Okies and Arkies were promptly stereotyped as a minority. The characteristics assigned to them were, of course, that they were dirty, shiftless, of loose sexual morals, improvident, lazy, and had far, far too many children. At the high point of this anti-Okie hullabaloo, a sign appeared in the foyer of a second-rate Bakersfield movie house which read: "Negroes and Okies upstairs."

This kind of treatment might well have turned the Joads into avengers—indeed they did some minor avenging in their strikes and protests—but the big confrontation, the final showdown between the migrants and the historically entrenched farm labor system, never took place. Steinbeck was naïve; we were all naïve. The influx of the Joads was not the finale to

Continued on page 38

Taken by the Wind

BY STANLEY W. PAHER

The photographic portrait of some formerly prosperous boomtowns—remnants of the age of bonanza and borrasca.

Probably no more ubiquitous a relic of the vanished West exists than the "ghost town," examples of which are scattered in shack-and-shanty profusion from the deserts of New Mexico to the mountains of Idaho. Most are the remnants of mining booms, for no other industry exhibited more of the boom-and-bust pathology necessary for their creation. The evolutionary pattern of the typical mining town displayed all the ritualism of a Kabuki drama: a rich, potentially rich, or hoped-for rich strike in one area or another would inspire an influx of starry-eyed hopefuls, each of whom staked out a claim. If the strike was genuine, a townsite was laid out. Then came the speculators: a small army of lawyers hoping to thrive on claim disputes, real estate brokers selling and trading town lots at superbly inflated prices, and shady characters manipulating stocks and fabricating mines. ("A Western mine," Mark Twain once remarked, "is a hole in the ground owned by a liar.") Along with them came the services: bankers, merchants, sign painters, a score or more saloonkeepers, prostitutes, and at least one newspaper editor; and the workers: teamsters, miners, muckers, and millworkers, if the area was rich enough to support them. They all mixed together with frenetic logic, buying, selling, speculating, promoting, scrambling and bustling in the name of enterprise and progress.

The period of furious boom for any given town, of course, depended entirely upon the quantity and quality of ore its mines produced; many towns evaporated before speculators could even consolidate their frontage or replace tents with shacks; others lasted long enough to achieve the solidity of brick; a few managed to survive well into the twentieth century, and even fewer are alive today. Even those which still function, however—like Goldfield, Nevada, the seat of Esmeralda County—have so far declined from their bonanza days as to qualify as shadows, if not quite ghosts.

In Nevada, as a matter of fact, the phenomenon of the boom-and-bust town flourished as it has in probably no other state. From the great days of the Comstock Lode to such turn-of-the-century excitements as Tonopah, Hawthorne, Fairview, Goldfield, Midas, Tuscarora, and scores more, much of the history of Nevada has been told in the lexicon of mining—a state of affairs impressively documented by the recent Nevada Ghost Towns and Mining Camps, *by Stanley W. Paher (Howell-North Books, Berkeley), which covers the past and present condition of nearly six hundred remnants of the age of bonanza and borrasca. From the book, we present here a representative pictorial sampling of towns that are—or almost are—no more. Goldfield and Belmont still live abbreviated existences; the others have simply died, their populations gone, their streets weedgrown, their ambitious architecture left to the vagaries of the wind.*

Rawhide: above, 1905; below, 1965.

Candelaria in the late 1880s—after the boom and before oblivion.

Candelaria endured the viscissitudes of enterprise long enough to achieve a few of the amenities—including a town doctor, seen at the left about to make his rounds.

The splendid Victorian accoutrements of the local waterworks company office was one more indication of the town's presumed permanence.

† Candelaria

First discovered by a band of roving Mexican prospectors in 1863, the silver veins of the Candelaria region were not exploited on a large scale until the mid-1870s. By 1876, activity had increased to the point where it seemed justified to lay out a town near the area's biggest mine, the Northern Belle, and Candelaria was born. Two months later, true to form, the town had acquired a post office, two hotels, restaurants, livery stables, a newspaper—the *True Fissure*—and eleven saloons. Also true to form, the town began to decline in 1883, when its two largest producers became involved in a hopeless tangle of litigation over conflicting claims. While there were short revivals in the 1890s and even as late as 1919, Candelaria soon deteriorated.

The distintegrating remnants of Pickhandle Gulch, Candelaria's prosperous suburb.

The proudest building in proud Belmont was the $25,000 county courthouse, seen at right in the 1890s and at far right as it looks today. Erected in 1876 from bricks manufactured in local kilns, it replaced a string of county offices scattered through the town.

† Belmont

One of the oldest of all the Nevada boomtowns, Belmont's destiny was forged in 1866 when the surface silver ores yielding from $200 to $3,000 a ton were discovered. Less than a year later, it had become the county seat and principal mining, milling, and trading center for settlements within a radius of a hundred miles. Fortuitously located in an area that provided access to ample supplies of wood, water, rock, and clay, the town achieved an uncommon degree of substantiality in stone and brick buildings and an air of hometown permanence with treelined streets, churches, and a suburban racetrack. By 1887, however, the principal mines had been worked clean, and the town entered a long period of decline. In 1905, the county seat was moved to Tonopah, forty miles to the southwest, and today Belmont contains but a fraction of its former population—and a collection of picturesque ruins.

An overview of Belmont at the turn of the century; by then borrasca had set in, and five years later the final blow to the town's fine hopes of permanent prosperity came when the rambunctious camp of Tonopah was awarded the county seat.

XUM

Goldfield

Not since the grandest days of the Comstock had Nevada seen a boomtown like Goldfield, founded in 1902 and given its first push toward glory by the clamoring rushes of 1904 and 1905. By 1907, it was the largest city in the state, with nearly twenty thousand people hustling after a piece of the action—including unionized miners, who struck the camp in 1906 and carried on a running battle with capitalism for nearly two years, and sharp-shooting promoter Tex Rickard, who displayed the same air of canny flamboyance that later built New York's Madison Square Garden. The boom lasted in an air of frenzy until 1910; thereafter production in the mines began to slack off, and in 1918 the Goldfield Consolidated Mining Company, mainstay of the camp, exhausted its ores and closed down. A fire which swept through fifty-two blocks of the town in 1923 obliterated much of what was left from the boom days, and while Goldfield today still serves as the seat for Esmeralda County, fewer than two hundred people call it home.

Tex Rickard, who once staged a shoot-out in Goldfield's streets for the edification of an excitable lady tourist, found his calling the promotion of prize fights. One of the most famous occurred at Goldfield in 1906, when middleweights "Battling" Nelson, a white man, and Joe Gans, one of the earliest (and best) black prizefighters, slugged it out to a draw in forty-four rounds in spite of temperatures that could fry a man's mind. Below, Tonopah-Goldfield Meat Company automobiles prepare to leave for deliveries east, west, north, and south.

The inevitable Merchant's Hotel, where a man could relax with his hat on.

Flourishing commerce along Main Street.

Stanley W. Paher *received his M.A. in political science from the University of Nevada. Some years ago, he began visiting ghost towns and collecting photographs, mostly from private collections. He has been free-lance writing for two years, and his work has appeared in many magazines and newspapers. His first book,* Nevada Ghost Towns and Mining Camps, *from which this article is excerpted, has recently been published by Howell-North.*

"The world's greatest mine known" was Fairview's appraisal of the Nevada Hills, which included three main buildings and at least a pair of outhouses. At right, jaunty miners pose outside Nevada Hills' Number One tunnel.

† Fairview †

During 1905 and 1906, discoveries of rich silver float in various areas of Nevada encouraged a number of quick booms. One of the quickest occurred some forty miles east of Fallon in June, 1906, when inspired promoters laid out a town to service fast-developing mines. For more than a year and a half, Fairview sprouted like a hypertrophic mushroom: the road from the rail connection sixty miles away at Hazen was lined with freighters burdened with goods and equipment; thousands came and went by stage; the town had a population topping two thousand, with hotels, banks, twenty-seven saloons, assay offices, a post office, a miners union hall, and the Fairview *News,* whose editor urged potential investors to "see Fairview first." Sagebrush and sand sold for one hundred dollars a front foot.

Optimism shifted into second gear in 1907, and the camp sought to remedy the unhappy situation of being sixty miles from a railhead by planning a vast network of lines which would connect Fairview with Austin to the east, Tonopah to the south, and Hazen to the west. The plans ended as plans, for by 1908 the mines on which the town fed began to play out, production falling to only 12 percent of the 1907 figure. By the end of the year, the town was minus a goodly portion of its population, including the editor of the *News.* High grade ore continued to be mined sporadically until after the end of World War I; today, the camp is dead, having become just one more entry in guidebooks and tourist handouts—obituaries for towns that are no more.

Daring Fairview ladies maintained their stylish femininity even aboard a rusty ore car.

Fairview, 1968: Except for this cement bank vault and the surrounding caved-in cellars, the town of Fairview has disappeared from the face of the earth.

XUM

A cartoonist's view of the cowman's life

THE WEST OF

HIS NAME was James Robert Williams. He was tall, rangy, weatherbeaten, and had a background ideally suited for the dust jacket of a book. He had done a hitch as a U.S. Cavalryman and later had drifted from one cow outfit to another in the Oklahoma Indian Territory for several years. He had known Geronimo when the Apache warrior was no longer on the warpath, and had ridden New Mexico's White Sands country as a hired hand for Oliver Lee. He had acquired the skill of a machinist, and once had even boxed two rounds with Bob Fitzsimmons. These experiences filled Williams's mind with a range of characters who were to make him famous as the creator of such cartoon strips as *Born Thirty Years Too Soon, Why Mothers Get Grey, Heroes Are Made, Not Born,* and the unforgettable *Out Our Way.*

To look at a collection of *Out Our Way* in 1970, almost fifty years after Williams got his first break, is almost like uncovering artifacts from another culture. There was nothing slick about his drawings, nothing violent, nothing political. There were no true confessions, no schizophrenic beagles nor midgets masquerading as children. There was an occasional tendency to drift toward sentimentality as though Williams had bought one too many for the town's crying drunk. But the strength of his cartoons was in the cast of characters he created, for these were images of people he knew.

Sugar, the ranch cook, was the embodiment of every chuckwagon artist who ever followed a trail herd or roundup crew. He was an ex-cowhand too beat up and too old to make it as a working cowhand anymore, but he would never know the loss of independence a welfare or retirement check would bring. Although his endless supply of caustic comments about the deterioration of man and beast in the first decades of the twentieth century belied his name, Sugar possessed a sense of humor and a code of honor that put him a notch or two above the stereotype of a cranky cook. In a very real way, Sugar was the mainstay of all the cowhands. He dispensed medicine when a man was sick, deflated egos by needling anybody or anything that smacked of fraud, and served as a buffer for men on the prod by allowing himself and his cooking to be a running joke for men in need of something to laugh about.

The other oldtimer in *Out Our Way* was Stiffy. In Stiffy, Williams created another leftover from the time of open range, longhorns, and trail drives. Like Sugar, he had been a young man in the last boom days of the cattle frontier, and he refused to give up the only way of life he considered worthwhile. The difference between Stiffy and Sugar was that one was a romantic and the other a realist. Even though he was past the age for topping broncs and had to push himself to keep up with the younger men, Stiffy stayed in the saddle. As if to compensate for this daily punishment to his body, he badgered Sugar, implying that any cowhand who became a cook never belonged on a horse in the first place. In turn, Sugar justified his decision to give up a cowhorse for a chuckwagon by reminding Stiffy of his age, slower reactions, and the easy job he had in pushing along the herd of tame Herefords that were being passed off as cattle.

Using Sugar and Stiffy as a symbolic struggle between the realist who knows his way of life has ended and the romantic who refuses to concede, Williams established a conflict that poked fun but carried an overtone of sadness at the changing world of the cow country. He

BY FEROL EGAN, with notes on the cartoons by W. H. HUTCHINSON

OUT OUR WAY

I'VE SEEN SOME MASTER PIECES HANGIN' IN SOME STATELY HALLS
AN' TH' SUNSET WORKIN' WONDERS ON TH' SIDES O' CANYON WALLS.
I'VE SEEN TH' MOON A TETCHIN' UP A HUNDRED SILVER STREAMS
AN' TH' STARS A TURNIN' DESERTS INTO LANDS O' FAIRY DREAMS.
WORKS O' ART—AN' MIGHTY PURTY, BUT, MY FAVORITE ONE OF ALL,
AN' I LOVE T' WATCH IT WORKIN' AFTER EVENIN' SHADOWS FALL,
WORKIN' ON A GROUP O' FACES, JEST AFORE WE HIT TH' BUNK,
YES, I THINK MY FAVORITE ARTIST IS A BLAZIN' MESQUITE CHUNK. 8-16

IT'S THISAWAY BOYS. MISTUH WESLEY KINNETT IS WRITIN A BOOK ON THE ROMANCE O' COWPUNCHIN'. AN' HE WANTS TUH WORK RIGHT WITH YOU BOYS SO'S HE CAIN GIT TH' ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE INTO HIS BOOK.
SHORE, HE'S JES IN TIME TUH HEP ME BURY THEM TWO HAWSES WE HAD TUH KILL YISTIDDY. GIT YUSEFF A SHOVEL MISTUH.
WELL HE KIN HELP ME WITH THIS HEAH WHITEWASHIN TH COOK SHACK AN' BUNK HOUSE
'D' LIKE A LITTLE HELP TUH GIT TH ENGINE BACK INTUH TH' FLIVUH.
1-20-25
THE ROMANCERS
J.R.WILLIAMS
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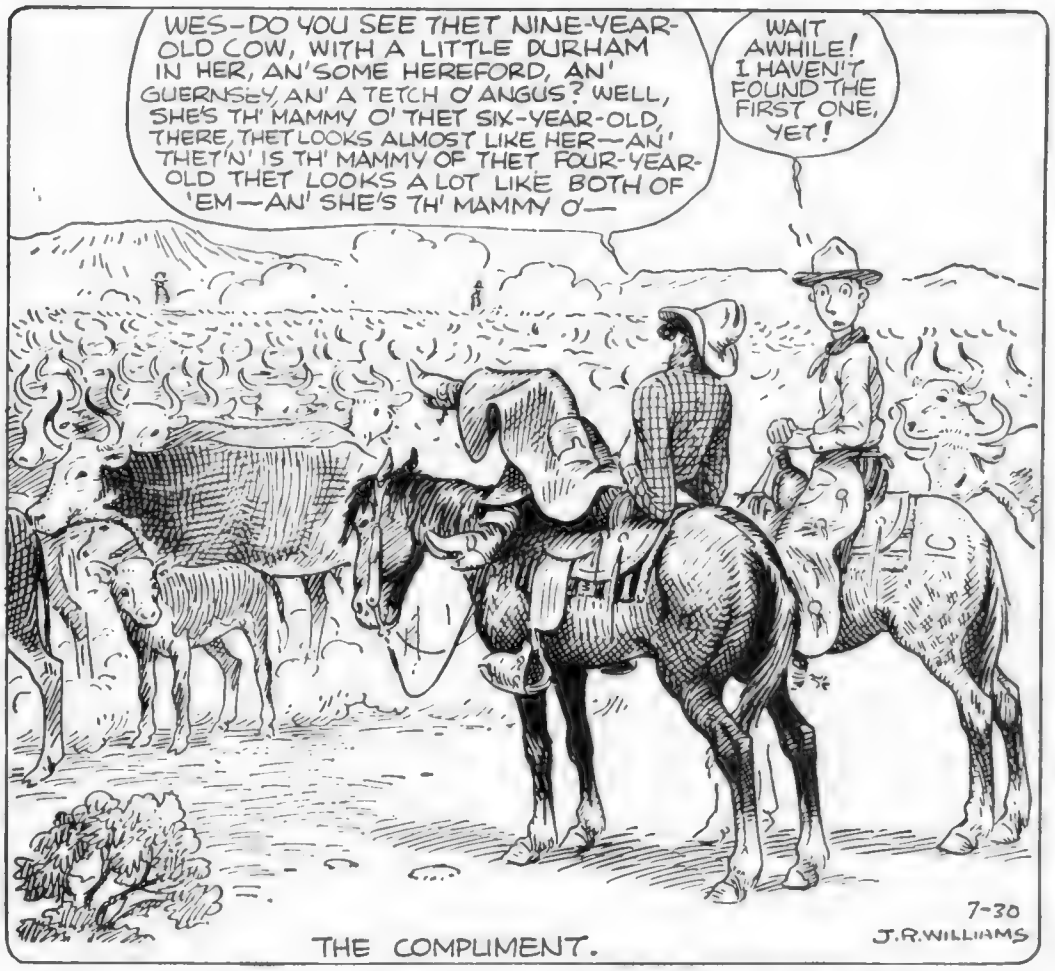
[illegible] in the Tularosa Basin of New Mexico, long before his cartoons [illegible] to [illegible] the [illegible], Jim Williams was appraised by Bill Nye as "as readily known as Oliver Ice processed. In these words: "You'll never make a cowboy in a hundred years. Too much Mark Twain Rhodes." So in "Wes," who grew shorter and more brutal in later drawings, Jim drew himself: the observer, the owner, the lover of the land and its life, but never the "hired man on horseback." [illegible] the "fifty-fifty" of the Stars.

even brought in a city character, Wes, who was a combination of Owen Wister and Theodore Roosevelt. Wes came to the ranch as a writer in search of the true feel of the West, but unlike TR he remained to become a rancher who tried to run his spread the way he imagined it had been done in Stiffy's youth.

The other characters in *Out Our Way* were men caught in the middle. They were too young to have been in on the last days of the cattle frontier but too old to have escaped its heritage. Curly, Cotton, Soda, and Ick—the Negro cowboy—were men living in a cultural transition zone. The day of living in town with one's family and driving out to the ranch in a pick-up truck had not yet arrived. They would have been appalled at the use of an airplane to help with the round-up or metal squeeze chutes to hold cattle for branding, cutting, and marking. But these things were not far off, and the men seemed to sense their coming.

Out Our Way was another last gasp from the dying American West. Nobody knew this better than cartoonist Williams, whose brand of western humor followed


WES-DO YOU SEE THET NINE-YEAR-OLD COW, WITH A LITTLE DURHAM IN HER, AN' SOME HEREFORD, AN' GUERNSEY, AN' A TETCH O' ANGUS? WELL, SHE'S TH' MAMMY O' THET SIX-YEAR-OLD, THERE, THET LOOKS ALMOST LIKE HER—AN' THET'N' IS TH' MAMMY OF THET FOUR-YEAR-OLD THET LOOKS A LOT LIKE BOTH OF 'EM—AN' SHE'S TH' MAMMY O'—
WAIT AWHILE! I HAVEN'T FOUND THE FIRST ONE, YET!
7-30
J.R.WILLIAMS
THE COMPLIMENT.

GOOD GOSH, SODA-- YOU'VE KNOCKED DOWN THIS HULL SIDE OF TH' CORRAL! YOU MUST BE BAD HURT!
NOT A BIT--TH' FENCE EASED MY FALL!
7-22
J.R.WILLIAMS
THE CUSHION
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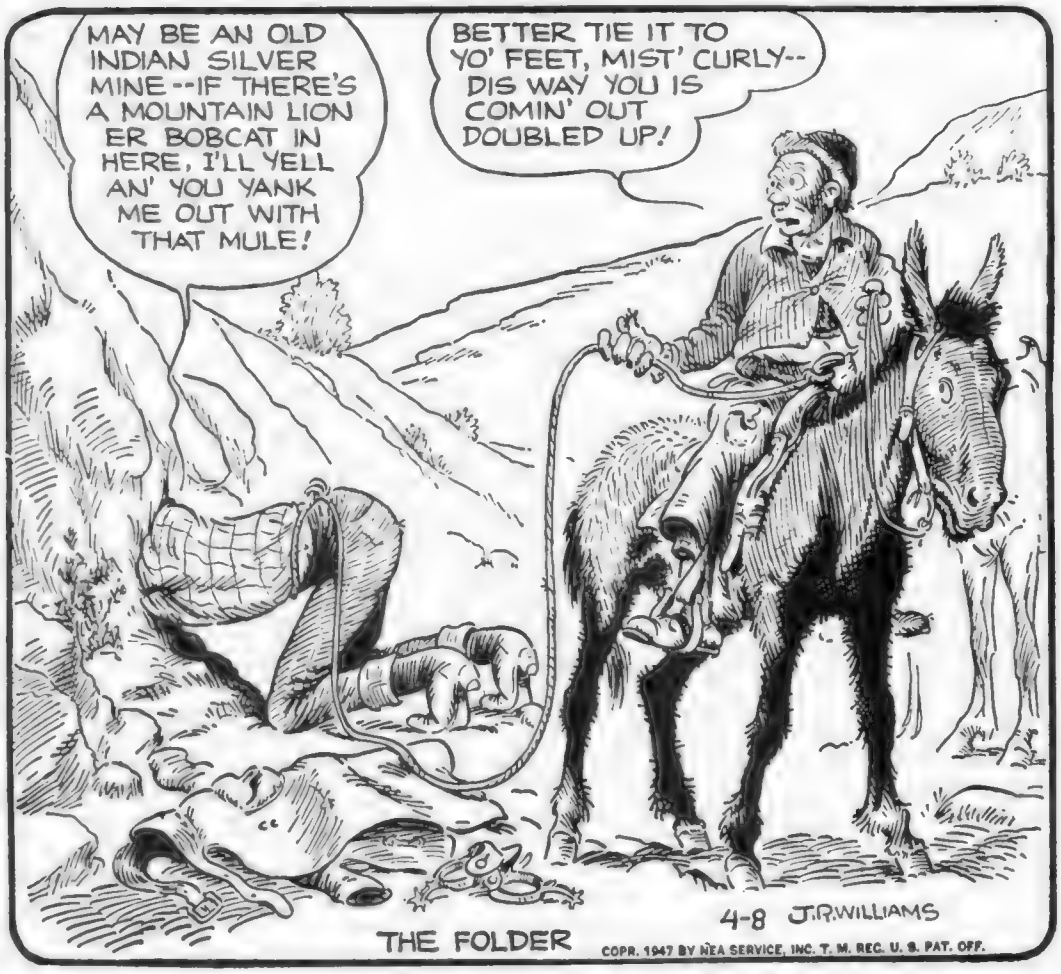
HERE'S TH' OVEN DOOR, RIGHT HERE.
AN' CLOSE IT, SUGAR! THER'S A TURRIBLE DRAFT OVER HERE -
HANG A BLANKET OVER IT
J.R.WILLIAMS
STANDING ROOM.
27.

Caustic as lye and rougher than a frozen cob in a frost-rimmed outhouse, Sugar stands for every Autocrat of the Dutch Oven, who did his job in wind and weather while situated "a thousand miles from a slice of lemon pie and just one foot from Hell."


MAY BE AN OLD INDIAN SILVER MINE--IF THERE'S A MOUNTAIN LION ER BOBCAT IN HERE, I'LL YELL AN' YOU YANK ME OUT WITH THAT MULE!
BETTER TIE IT TO YO' FEET, MIST' CURLY-- DIS WAY YOU IS COMIN' OUT DOUBLED UP!
4-8 J.R.WILLIAMS
THE FOLDER
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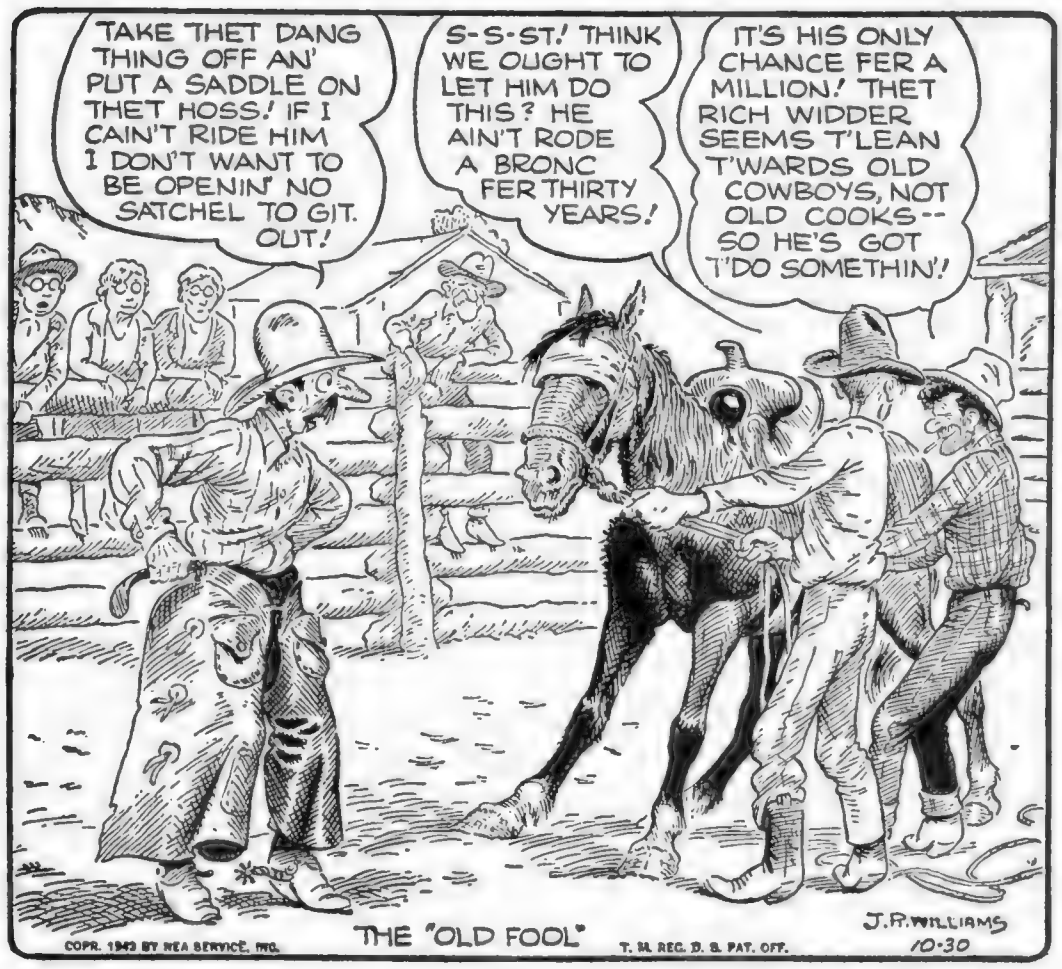
in the tradition extending from Mark Twain to J. Ross Browne and on to Bill Nye. Williams used burlesque and exaggeration, but the basis for laughter was solidly tied to the snubbing post of reality. He let his characters play out their roles in a changing southwestern scene. Curly and Cotton and the other hands who helped Wes enact his private vision of a vanished time worked at many jobs that had not been part of the trade before the end of the nineteenth century. They repaired automobiles, built barbed wire fences in country no self-respecting cow would go near, and nursed fat Herefords along while wondering what it must have been like to hold a herd of spooky longhorns when ball lightning danced on the tips of their horns.

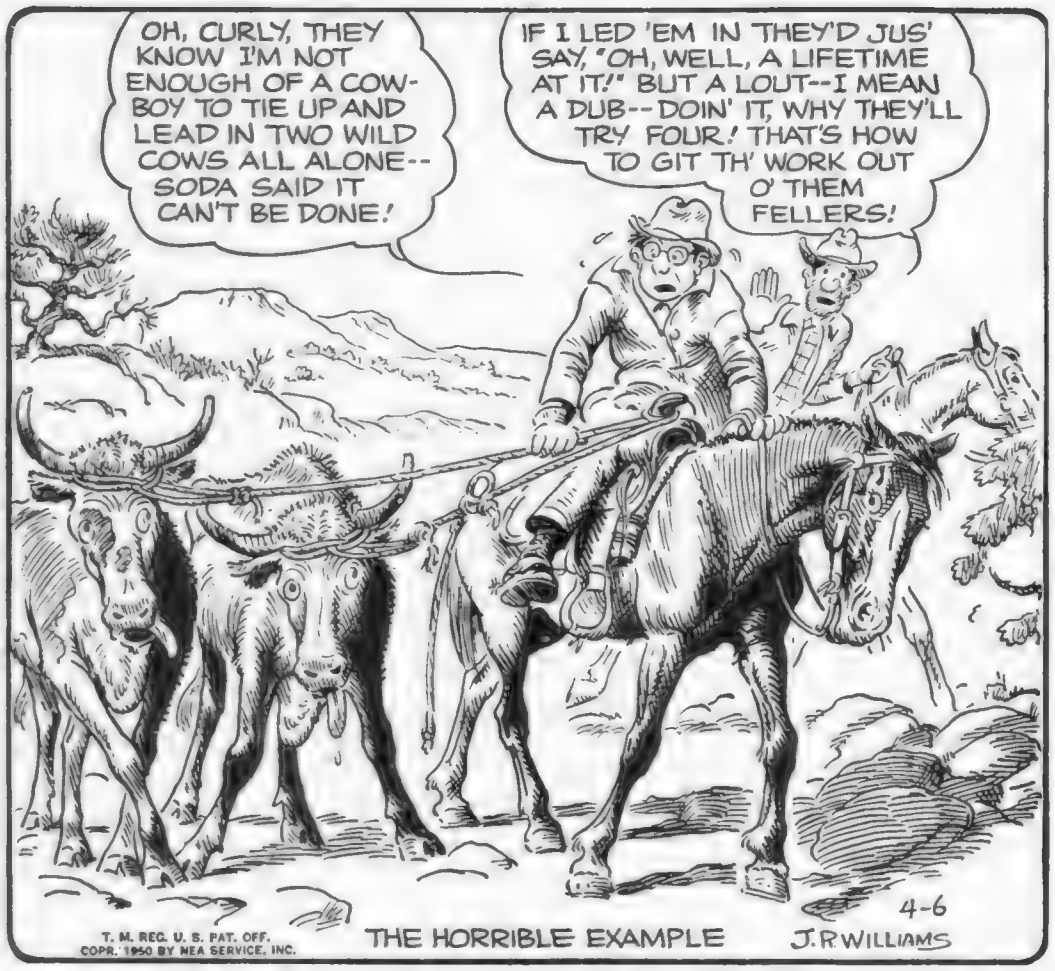
All during the 1920s, 1930s, and right up to the end of World War II, *Out Our Way* maintained a tremendous popularity because the comic situations were developed out of the historic American struggle with nature in order to make a living. Ranchers, farmers, country townsfolk, and city dwellers not too far removed from their past, saw themselves


TAKE THET DANG THING OFF AN' PUT A SADDLE ON THET HOSS! IF I CAIN'T RIDE HIM I DON'T WANT TO BE OPENIN' NO SATCHEL TO GIT. OUT!
S-S-ST! THINK WE OUGHT TO LET HIM DO THIS? HE AIN'T RODE A BRONC FER THIRTY YEARS!
IT'S HIS ONLY CHANCE FER A MILLION! THET RICH WIDDER SEEMS T'LEAN T'WARDS OLD COWBOYS, NOT OLD COOKS-- SO HE'S GOT T'DO SOMETHIN'!
COPR. 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.
THE "OLD FOOL"
T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.
J.R.WILLIAMS
10-30

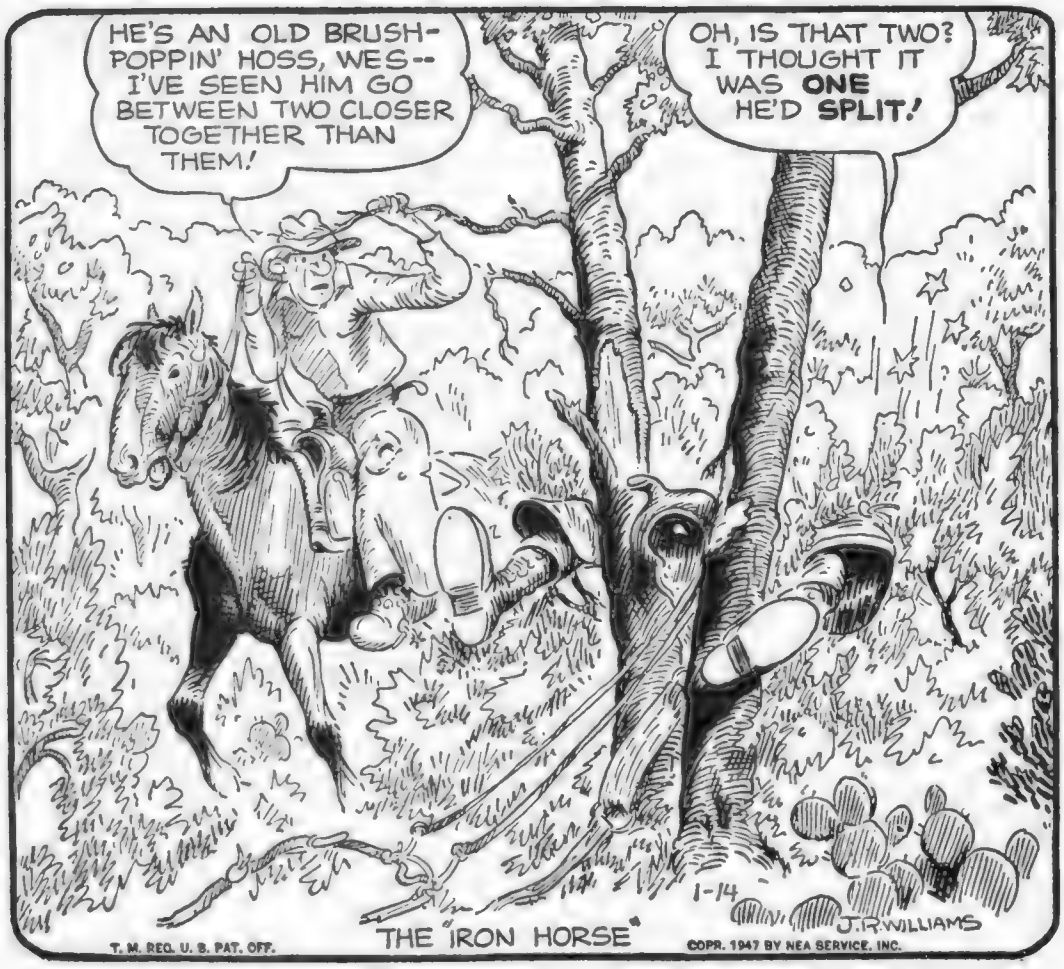
Men who'd learned their trade on the old Visalia "A-fork" saddle regarded the newer, undercut swell-forked bronc saddles as something that had to be de-horned with an axe before a man could use them. They were called "bear traps" by some; they were man traps all too often.

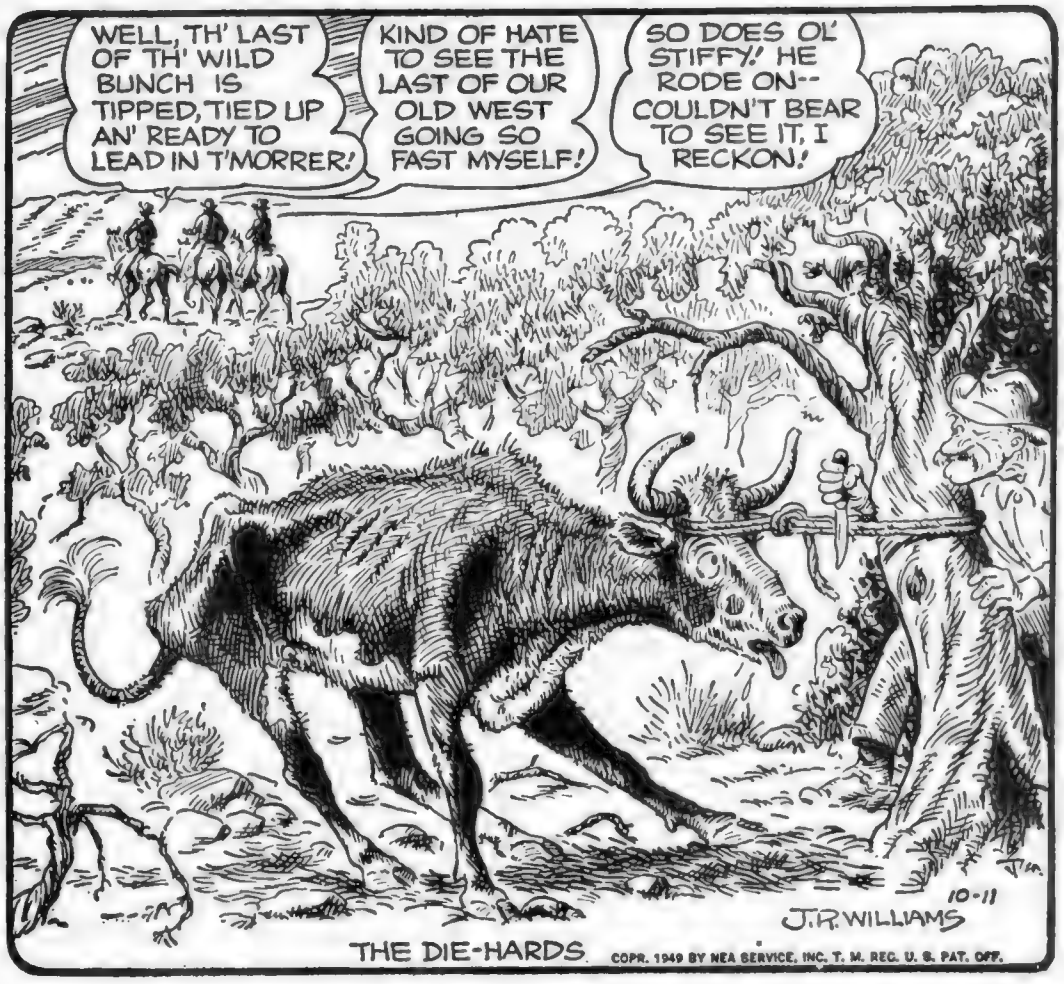
I HARDLY BLAME THOSE KIDS FOR LAUGHING AT OLD DENT ON THAT AWFUL PLUG! WHY, HE'S THE MOST AWFUL LOOKING COWBOY I EVER SAW!
WELL, HE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL TO ME, WES, BECAUSE HE'LL ALWAYS BE IN TH' RIGHT PLACE AT TH' RIGHT TIME WITHOUT A BIG FUSS!
J.R.WILLIAMS
THE TOP HAND
8-26
COPR 1942
NEA SERVICE, INC T M REG U S PAT OFF

"Old Dent" sure didn't "throw a pretty shadow," and he'd have to hold his paunch with his bridle hand to find the horn when dallying, but even as "Cochise" John Slaughter, who sat a horse like a wart on a pickle, he "would do to take along."


OH, CURLY, THEY KNOW I'M NOT ENOUGH OF A COW-BOY TO TIE UP AND LEAD IN TWO WILD COWS ALL ALONE-- SODA SAID IT CAN'T BE DONE!
IF I LED 'EM IN THEY'D JUS' SAY, "OH, WELL, A LIFETIME AT IT!" BUT A LOUT--I MEAN A DUB--DOIN' IT, WHY THEY'LL TRY FOUR! THAT'S HOW TO GIT TH' WORK OUT O' THEM FELLERS!
4-6
T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.
COPR. 1950 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.
THE HORRIBLE EXAMPLE
J.R.WILLIAMS

From his K4 ranch,
out of Camp Wood, Arizona,
South to the head of
Seventh Mesa and beyond,
there were plenty of
cowboys / cattle that had to
be roped, thrown, hog-tipped,
tree-lined and tied in,
after they'd "cooled off" at a free
for a day or two. There
were riders in that country as
cowboy as the stock, who could
and did beat it two, three,
and by legend, four at a time.


HE'S AN OLD BRUSH-POPPIN' HOSS, WES-- I'VE SEEN HIM GO BETWEEN TWO CLOSER TOGETHER THAN THEM!
OH, IS THAT TWO? I THOUGHT IT WAS ONE HE'D SPLIT!
1-14
T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.
THE "IRON HORSE"
COPR. 1947 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.
J.R.WILLIAMS


WELL, TH' LAST OF TH' WILD BUNCH IS TIPPED, TIED UP AN' READY TO LEAD IN T'MORRER!
KIND OF HATE TO SEE THE LAST OF OUR OLD WEST GOING SO FAST MYSELF!
SO DOES OL' STIFFY! HE RODE ON-- COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE IT, I RECKON!
10-11
J.R. WILLIAMS
THE DIE-HARDS
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"Stiffy" was road-weary and work-brittle, but he had drunk water from a cow track and laid out with the dry stink. He was as durable as the wasp-waisted, fat-hammed, deer-legged animals that had sapped his years, and he had a kinship with them and the land as vital as life itself.

and their friends in these characters. Here was a cultural mirror; a man could look into it and know he was one of the funniest critters ever to kick up dust on the landscape. But the disasters associated with World War II made Americans feel uneasy about laughing at themselves.

Perhaps we will never know this kind of laughter again; there is nothing funny about world wars, genocide, superbombs, intercontinental missiles, and a running start toward the final destruction of the planet. Although the necessity for laughter remains with us, it is doubtful that the warm humor of *Out Our Way* will ever return. Such humor requires innocence and social roots, but our innocence has been wasted in too many nights of nightmare and our roots have become hard to find. This loss may be the Ghost Dance for J. R. Williams's *Out Our Way*. In a world of constant crisis there can be no innocence, only ignorance. And with an expanding population confined in overlapping cities, there are fewer and fewer people able to reach back into their past and identify with the breed of men that Williams depicted.

At best, the new breed of westerner looks upon these cartoon characters as museum pieces awaiting the proper classification by a taxonomist. At worst, he condemns the world of *Out Our Way* as *out* and no longer *our way*. Only in the backwaters of the American West does this tradition of frontier humor hang on. Yet, even in those isolated pockets, mass communication and rapid transportation are quickly bringing the New Culture to the uninformed. Here and there, in old line camps and rundown saloons, yellowed clippings of *Out Our Way* cartoons are tacked to the walls. But the men who look at these faded drawings and softly chuckle are laughing at memories as much as anything else. For the West of *Out Our Way* is memory in the form of cartoon, and nobody knew this any better than James Robert Williams.

Ferol Egan, *who contributes the "Books in Brief" column to* The American West Review, *is the author of* The El Dorado Trail, *recently published as part of McGraw-Hill's "American Trails" series, and is currently completing a major study of the Paiute War for Prentice-Hall.*

W. H. Hutchinson, *a contributing editor of* THE AMERICAN WEST *and professor of history at Chico State College, grew up in the New Mexico ranch country and knew the kind of people J. R. Williams "borrowed" for "Out Our Way." His books on the West include* A Bar-Cross Man *(1956),* California: Two Centuries of Man, Land, and Growth in the Golden State *(American West, 1969), and an award-winning two-volume biography of Senator Thomas R. Bard,* Oil, Land, and Politics *(1965).*

THE WYATT EARP SYNDROME

A somewhat irreverent inquiry into the old Western, the new criticism, and the pathology of the American psyche.

BY C. L. SONNICHSEN

NON-AGRESSIVE TYPES, like librarians and professors, are supposed to live in book-lined cells where the dust and noise of the busy thoroughfares seldom penetrate—"a world," in the words of Louis MacNeice, "that is safe and silent." In our time, however, even librarians and professors are being rudely jolted by facts and situations which they cannot escape and cannot readily understand. The old certainties are no longer certain. Take a look, for example, at what has happened to the once lowly western novel.

If we can trust the evidence that is now before us, the traditional story about the West, as familiar as the morning papers, is in the midst of a revolution which is creating a whole new set of critical assumptions. The horse opera, oater, hayburner, or formula Western is being taken seriously and studied earnestly by experts. Historians of literature are evaluating it, graduate students are writing dissertations about it, and the list of book-length examinations is growing steadily. I count at least eight of these critical volumes since 1960, two of them in French, partially or wholly devoted to western fiction. It is true that they are mostly by academic people who find it difficult if not impossible to break away from Hawthorne and Melville, Cooper and Whitman, and come to grips with really popular western material. But they try. And some of them achieve considerable success.

The reading public seems to be with them. Hardly anybody buys "serious" novels (mostly written by professors) anymore, but everybody (including a great many professors) is now finding deep significance in the old-fashioned, or new-fashioned, shoot-em-up. For awhile, western stories were considered myths in the making—"the American morality play," in *Time* magazine's phrase—in which the theme depicts a conflict of Light with Darkness and the good guys always win. In recent years, however, a new position has developed in which the Western is no longer thought of merely as something to be read for amusement, improvement, or escape. To contemporary critics and historians the Western reveals strange things, uncomfortable Freudian things, that our fathers would never have suspected and would rather not have known. Listen to J. K. Folsom in *The American Western Novel* (1966): "The stalwart cowboy . . . who rides off into the sunset leaving a weeping maid behind once seemed pathetic, even tragic; to us he seems ridiculous, and may even be, we whisper, homosexual."

How can we account for such reversals in the critical view of the western hero? A good starting place would be Frank Waters' *The Colorado* (1946), the book which really fired the first shot in the campaign to knock Wyatt Earp off the pedestal on which Stuart Lake's *Frontier Marshal* (1931) had placed him. The present vogue of the western gunman, Waters declares, proceeds from the fact that "More than any other, he embodies the secret loneliness in all our hearts, the uninhibited lust for violence, the relentless unrest."

In 1950 Henry Nash Smith published his influential *Virgin Land* which moved with long strides in the same direction. Smith set out to psychoanalyze the whole nation by dissecting its escape literature. As he saw it, popular fiction is generated in the mass subconscious. It "tends to become an

objectified mass dream. . . . The individual writer abandons his own personality and identifies himself with the reveries of his readers."

Recently the idea that western stories are handy tools for probing the mind of the masses has undergone some striking refinements. John C. Cawelti in an article called "The Gunfighter and Society" (THE AMERICAN WEST, March, 1968) takes a sociological approach:

> These patterns of action suggest that the new adult Western seeks to resolve in fantasy some of the major social dilemmas of our time: The sense that human society is doomed to terrible outbursts of violence; the fear of social conflict; the recognition that society both protects and threatens the individual; the increasing awareness of the chaotic violence, crime and brutality that lie just below the peaceful surface of American life.

Theodore Isaac Rubin, a psychiatrist, approaches the problem from another angle in "What Movies Reveal About You, the Audience" *(Glamour,* October, 1968). "Many of us are emotional time bombs," Dr. Rubin thinks, "and acceptable identification with heroic violence makes a minute amount of relief possible." All of us "contain a little murderous psychology," and this side of us responds to the "heroic, unfeeling killing" in western movies.

The western story, then, is not just a story any more. It is a social document which reveals modern man and the society in which he exists. The conclusion is that modern man, at least the subdivision which reads Westerns, is sick, really sick —is, in fact, a victim of the Wyatt Earp Syndrome. Thanks to Lake's idealized biography, *Frontier Marshal,* Earp has become the perfect example of the gunman hro. He was a moral paragon—drank no whiskey and was faithful to the memory of the girl he married and lost in his youth. He was an invincible champion with fists or gun, nerveless, lightning fast on the draw, a killer with a tender heart, a protector of the weak. That readers can and do identify in droves with this larger-than-life figure is proved by the multiple editions through which Lake's book has gone and by the number of motion pictures and television shows starring Earp and his friend Doc Holliday.

The reason for this identification, we are now told, is the reader's desire to act out his lusts, death wishes, revenge impulses, compensatory fantasies of all kinds. When he puts down his money for a copy of *Tombstone Showdown* or *Warlock* or *Who Rides with Wyatt,* he gives himself away for what he is—something out of Kraft-Ebbing or the Marquis de Sade. The six-shooter becomes a phallic symbol. The walk-down—antagonists confronting each other in the dusty main street of a western town—is a sacrificial rite. The last frontier, in the words of James K. Folsom, "is finally something more than an aspect of the American West: its topography comes to resemble the landscape of the human soul." And a pretty revolting landscape it is.

What sort of person is he, then, this twisted human being who reads Westerns for the wrong reasons and takes such satisfaction in the bloody if apocryphal deeds of Wyatt Earp? The "concurrent symptoms" which produce the syndrome of which he is a victim would analyze out somewhat as shown in the chart below:

The Concurrent Symptoms of the Wyatt Earp Syndrome

Loneliness:
The reader knows that he is a congenital stinker and that nobody likes him. He identifies with the Lone Ranger or Hopalong Cassidy, and in his world of fantasy becomes a defender of the people, who thereupon accept and love him.

Inferiority Complex:
A cowardly little pipsqueak, the reader is afraid to try to dominate anybody and therefore dreams of being the Pecos Kid who never gives an order twice.

Loss of Moral Values:
The reader resents domination by his mother, continued in his wife. He gets even by assuming that the only good woman in his Western dream world is a bad woman. He is married to a "good" woman, and she has turned out to be pretty bad for him. A bad woman would have to be better. At least she would not do all the talking.

Bloodlust:
The reader's Sunday-school teacher spent Sunday morning assuring him that it was all right for the Jews to smite the Amalekites hip and thigh and spoil the Philistines because they were the enemies of God's people. The Jews were ruthless but righteous killers, like Wyatt Earp. By identifying with them he could watch all that blood run and do a lot of looting and at the same time remain a good Christian, a loyal American, and a lover of birds and little furry animals.

The chart on the previous page shows the average reader of Westerns as many critics and at least some of the writers of commercial Westerns think of him. One recent novel with which most movie-goers are familiar is *The Hour of the Gun*, by Robert Kreps. Fawcett Publications issued it in 1967 as a follow-up to the "towering motion picture" of the same title.

It is about Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday, the fight at the OK corral and the aftermath (completely imaginary) of that famous fight. Wyatt is a noble character obsessed by the law. This concept is not an original idea: Oakley Hall took the same view in his much-discussed novel *Warlock*. It is a sure-fire way, however, of getting inside the reader's defenses, and Mr. Kreps has a right to use it. But Wyatt doesn't fool Doc Holliday. Doc is a sardonic wit who contemplates life with a curled upper lip and distrusts all human pretensions to idealism, including Wyatt's. He is vindicated when Wyatt finally takes the law into his own hands after one of his brothers is killed and another crippled for life.

The Princetonian cast of their minds and vocabularies appears, for example, in the dialogue which occurs as Doc hands Wyatt his badge after the OK corral fight:

> "Here, son, masked ball's over. No more Hallowe'en till next year."
>
> "Okay," said Wyatt, heavily, accepting it. "You're incorrigible, Doc."
>
> "Know why I like you, old lawdog? Cause you know words like *incorrigible*. You were cut out for better things than to stand behind a gun."
>
> "So were you."
>
> *"Touché,"* said Doc evenly. *"Touché* and check, Wyatt."

The big moment comes when Wyatt and Doc run Ike Clanton, the villain, to earth in Mexico, where he has a big ranch and a palatial *hacienda*. In these times a villain must belong to the Establishment, even in a Western.

> Wyatt walked south again, along the porch, his eyes flicking each gap between pillars as he passed it. Then Clanton stepped out from his hiding place behind the furthest column, shotgun cocked and held in both hands. And Wyatt came on. . . .
>
> He smiled. It was perhaps the most dreadful grimace that Wyatt Earp had ever made, compounded of hate and fury and a grim, pitiless, inhuman joy. He walked steadily on toward the man, who waited for him, frozen in his place. Wyatt made not the slightest motion toward the gun in the holster. He simply walked forward coldly until Clanton, his hard lined face pale as milk, jerked the shotgun up to fire.
>
> Then Wyatt made the draw of a lifetime and the gun bucked and roared in his hand and Clanton was slammed backward, staggering on his bootheels for a yard more, his face astonished, his finger tightening on the double trigger so that the blast of the greener tore into the side of his great house; and he whirled and fell on his face, the shotgun caught in the crook of his right arm so that it came with a crunch against the forearm and broke it as Clanton crashed to the floor. Wyatt walked forward and kicked him over viciously onto his back. Clanton was alive, his dark and cynical eye open and glaring at Wyatt, his mouth drooling saliva and a steady low droning noise of agony. Wyatt shot him in the belly twice and stood above him and reloaded his gun, six bullets, and very methodically and without pause shot his head to pieces so that when the hammer clicked on an empty cartridge the thing at his feet looked like a man's body with a shattered pumpkin full of blood and shards of bone stuck atop the neckerchief at his throat.
>
> Then Wyatt reloaded his six-gun and shoved it down hard into the holster and, turning his back on what he had done, went to the door and into the house. . . .

If this sort of action is what the average reader of Westerns yearns for, he is a sick man indeed, and the Wyatt Earp Syndrome is no illusion. I submit that he picked up the germ back there in Sunday School when he first heard of the joys of righteous killing. I have no doubt that Sampson with his asinine jawbone killed his thousand men much as Earp killed Clanton in Kreps' novel, "very methodically and without pause," knocking their heads to pieces so that they resembled "shattered pumpkins full of blood and shards of bone stuck atop," whatever they wore around their necks.

No intelligent person, of course, would ever believe that Mr. Kreps wrote that passage seriously. Of course he didn't. He wrote it with his face straight and his tongue in cheek, well knowing that the current fashion is to kid the horse opera all over the pasture. We hear about the "camp" or "pop" Western and find that the greatest successes in movies, television shows, and soft-cover books are seasoned with overtones of exaggeration, burlesque, non-acidulous satire. This is another proof that the Western is being taken seriously. Satire is rarely wasted on trivial or insignificant things. It could also be argued that we satirize only those things which fascinate us. A few fictional titles will show which way the wind is blowing:

Thomas Berger, *Little Big Man* (1964)
David Markson, *The Ballad of Dingus Magee* (1966)
Philip Ketchum, *Support Your Local Sheriff* (based on a screenplay by William Bower, 1968)
Charles Portis, *True Grit* (1968)
David Markson, *Sure Shot Shapiro* (1968)
Bill Gulick, *Liveliest Town in the West* (1969)
John Templeton, *Charlie Eagletooth's War* (1969)

True Grit made the biggest splash, and author Charles Portis was nearly drowned in enthusiastic comment. The film, featuring John Wayne, provoked even more. The book deserved its reception. Mattie Ross, the heroine, is a "pure" girl with an earnest faith in God and a burning desire to avenge her father's murder. She never suspects that there is any discrepancy between her faith and her desire. The style is priceless. Mr. Portis conveys an impression of absolute rightness and authenticity by combining frontier colloquialisms with Victorian literary touches. Mattie is perfectly real-

Continued on page 60

Out West WITH THE ROWDY BRAKEMAN

A Recollection from the Age of Steam

Presented by RICHARD REINHARDT

ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, old-time railroad men begin their stories on a wistful note, with sentimental recollections of a little boy who loved to watch the trains go by, savoring the symbols on the boxcars like candy on his tongue: the Grand Trunk Line, the Erie Road, the Great Northern, the Burlington, the Santa Fe. . . .

Take, for example, the story of Daniel Willard, a New England farm boy who became one of the most distinguished presidents of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. For him, the first taste of that irresistible railroad confection was the old, wood-burning locomotives of the Vermont Central, which used to cut across his father's pasture on the banks of the Connecticut River, trailing clouds of white smoke through the meadows and setting the calves and colts scampering off the tracks.

For Samuel Vauclain, a tough, resourceful chief executive of the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, the same enticing flavor lurked in the miasma of coal smoke and valve oil that hung about the roundhouse of the Pennsylvania Railroad in the Allegheny Mountain town where he was born. For Herbert Hamblen, the adventurous New Yorker who wrote a classic railroad biography called *The General Manager's Story*, it was a freight train, puffing slowly and laboriously up a heavy grade, "the brakemen sitting—if it happened to be pleasant weather—on their brake wheels, with folded arms and hat brims flapping in the breeze."

Often, it was these rough young brakemen who captured the imagination of the boy by the side of the tracks, infecting him with an incurable longing to work on the railroad. The brakeman's job was dangerous, as any trackside boy could

EDITOR'S NOTE: The steam locomotive, rattling its way across the deserts and mountains and rivers of the West, was the Great Machine of the nineteenth century, the most eloquent technological symbol of an age that believed Americans could do anything. It spoke also of adventure and romance, and to more than three generations of small boys, the railroad man's life seemed the epitome of ambition. Railroad men themselves were not reluctant to admit that they might indeed be among God's more favored creatures, a conviction amply illustrated in **Workin' on the Railroad: Reminiscences from the Age of Steam,** edited with commentary by Richard Reinhardt and published this month by the American West Publishing Company. The following article, introduced by Reinhardt, has been extracted from the book.

easily see; but it was also attainable, comprehensible. It seemed to consist primarily of skipping from car to car, setting brakes, ducking for tunnels, and sometimes going back with a flag to protect the train from the following express.

For all the simplicity of their work, however, brakemen had all the attractive attributes of professional railroad men. They spoke a spicy slang, smelled of beer and tobacco, and had been everywhere. When they walked downtown, they wore new black suits with a woven-in pattern of one inch squares, trimmed around the lapels and pocket-flaps with heavy satin braid; and their spring bottom pants flared out below the ankles, forming bells that extended to the toes of their high-heeled boots. Braking was an obvious place for an ambitious young man to begin his railroad career. The job was easy enough for any boy to learn—the main problem consisted in staying alive to enjoy it. During the first fifty or sixty years of steam, thousands of brakemen lost their lives to the peculiar hazards of their work. There was simply no way for a man to avoid danger while coupling cars with a link and pin or setting hand brakes on the top of a swaying, windswept boxcar on a freezing winter night. A brakeman who escaped being hurled to the ground or crushed between moving freight cars could thank his stars more than his own skill.

Presumably, it was this constant exposure to mayhem and death that caused many old-time brakemen to develop a callous, pessimistic outlook and a reckless style of behavior. Brutalized by the hardship of their work, brakemen became the worst drunkards, gamblers, and rowdies in a profession that was infamous for drinking, drifting, and disorder. When preachers and social reformers decried the moral degradation

IN 1876, I WAS HIRED by the Santa Fe as a brakeman on the Kansas prairie and detailed to run between Newton and Topeka. The population of Topeka at that time was close to fifteen thousand. It was a clean town with decent hotels and good food at reasonable prices. It also was the home of a number of skilled poker players. I have always believed that I should have liked to live there permanently.

As for Newton, its site had been open prairie five years earlier. To capture some of the cattle trade of Abilene, the Santa Fe had decided in 1871 to build a new town about seventy-five miles farther southwest. In less than sixty days Newton had a population of over two thousand souls.

From all reports, most of them were mighty tough souls. As usual in a cow town, there was open season on the marshal. That individual had to be quicker on the draw than any drunken tough looking for trouble. If the marshal wasn't quicker, he was soon run out of town—or dead. It was about that time that the border saying originated: "No Sundays west of Newton. No God west of Pueblo." The Newton I knew in 1876 was quiet, however. A church had taken over a former saloon, but it was possible for the congregation, when they directed their gaze heavenward, to see bullet holes in the ceiling.

The railroadman and the cowboy shared a dread of the winter months.

of railroad men, it was railroad *brakemen* they had in mind —although, as a matter of fact, the tough, fatalistic attitude of the brakemen permeated the entire railroad fraternity.

Nowhere on the continent was the life of a brakeman more difficult than along the cattle frontier of Kansas in the 1870s. The cars and locomotives were old and cheap; the roadbeds were new and lightly ballasted; the winter storms were horrendous; the cargoes of longhorn cattle were intractable; and at the end of every line of track there was a frontier cow town, inhabited by belligerent, gun-carrying horsemen who turned out to be the natural enemies of railroad brakies.

To endure the cattle run, a brakeman needed exceptional courage and unusual luck. Even so, there were railroad men who found this precarious assignment exactly to their taste. Among these daredevils was a young boomer named Harry French, straight from the switching yards at K.C., with a rudimentary mustache sprouting on his lip and a confident smile at the corners of his mouth. The gambling tables of Dodge City, the respect of his peers, and $65 a month in salary made life on the prairie quite acceptable to Harry French. He rambled joyfully from Topeka to Hunnewell, out at the edge of the Indian Territory; and the only thing that irritated him was a yen for more adventure. His memoirs, dictated in the 1930s to his son, Chauncey Del French, are an evocative record of the brakeman's life. ❧ —RICHARD REINHARDT

Richard Reinhardt, *a contributing editor for* THE AMERICAN WEST, *is the author of numerous articles on politics, history, and conservation for such magazines as* San Francisco, Cry California, *the conservationist quarterly, and* THE AMERICAN WEST. Workin' on the Railroad *is his second book for the American West Publishing Company; his first,* Out West on the Overland Train *(1967) has long since become a classic of railroad lore. His first novel,* Red Apple, *will be forthcoming in the fall of this year.*

Longhorns and buffalo had a habit of drifting before the icy blasts of a Kansas norther. For the cowboy, this meant the loss of control of the herd under his care; for the railroadman, it meant an extra hazard when stray herds sought shelter in the railway cuts. Many wrecks were caused by trains plowing into packed masses of animals.

I was introduced to a Kansas blizzard the first winter I worked for the Santa Fe. There was a light fall of snow, and then the wind started—a wind such as I had never known before. The chill of its snow-laden blast seemed to make paper of warm garments. I made my way with considerable difficulty from my boarding house to my favorite saloon. Only my anticipation of an evening of poker made me struggle against that powerful blast of icy, sleet-laden wind. I had just thawed out beside a roaring fire and got nicely started in the game, a noggin of warm whiskey by my elbow, when a call boy tapped me on the shoulder.

"French," he said, "the dispatcher wants you right away."

"What's up?" I demanded.

"You're going out with a light engine, ahead of the regular passenger train. There's a freight engine broke down somewhere beyond Cimarron."

"Why did you pick on me?" I grumbled.

"That's easy," the call boy replied, grinning. "I knew where to find you."

There was nothing to do but sign his greasy book. An hour later our freight engine rumbled over the last switch and headed out into the open prairie.

"It sure is a nasty night," I remarked to the engineer as I thawed my half-frozen fingers on the boiler-head.

"You ain't seen it all yet, kid," he replied. "Wait 'til we hit them big cuts around the Arkansas."

I climbed over onto the front end of the fireman's seat box. The half-warm cab was a great deal better than a boxcar top on this particular night. There was one other consolation—I would get to deadhead back on a passenger train. But I had a few worries. There was enough snow on the rails to retard our engine noticeably, whereas the passenger train behind us would have no snow to buck. It would probably follow us closely all the way. Should the cuts be blocked with snow—or animals—I would have some fast flagging to do.

When we hit the first of the cuts, all three of us breathed a sigh of relief. There was no snow in it; the wind had swept it thoroughly. I climbed off the seat box and took a position close to the tank brake. Suddenly, the engineer let out a yell, "Cattle!" I spun the hand brake on, swung on it, locked it, and dived up onto the woodpile on the tender. There was a queer bumping noise as we plowed into the herd, then a real crash as the engine plunged off the rails and tipped partly over.

I was thrown—a dizzy, whirling sensation—and lit on thin ice at the edge of the Arkansas. Fortunately, the water was not deep and I escaped with only a wetting. Longhorns and buffalo were thrashing about as I climbed the low bank. The fireman was helping the injured engineer back onto the tender; his own arm hung loosely by his side. I located my lanterns. Both were out—only the red light was in serviceable condition.

"Matches," I gasped through chattering teeth. My clothes were freezing to me. I accepted a handful from the fireman, tilted the lantern upside down, and held a match under the wick.

"Be ready to unload," I warned. "They might get by me."

There were plenty of animals milling around the engine, but they seemed puzzled by the red light and made no attempt to charge me. I dodged and twisted to get free of them. Once clear of the herd, I ran as fast as I could. After a few minutes of sprinting, I could see the headlight of the passenger train.

My frantic signals were answered by a call for brakes. The staccato snorts of the engine in reverse were sweet music to my ears. When the engine passed me, her drivers were turning as fast in reverse as they had been in forward motion a few seconds previously. I could see the brakeman and conductor twisting on brakes between the coaches. Less than twenty feet separated the two engines when the passenger train screeched to a stop.

Wrapped in blankets and nursing a bottle of whiskey that a sympathetic passenger gave me, I spent the rest of that night hovering over a stove in the baggage car, trying to get the chill out of my bones.

IT WAS A FEW MONTHS afterward that the division superintendent called me in and offered me a run between Dodge City, Granada, and Pueblo. Dodge City, Queen of the Cow Towns! If he could have guessed how much I wanted to see it! I left as soon as possible, riding deadhead on a pass.

Shortly after the train left Newton, the passenger conductor was injured making a coupling. The conductor asked me to take charge of the read end of the train. He offered to pay me out of his own pocket, but I refused to accept his money. I was glad to be of service—and curious for this experience.

The rear car was one of the newfangled Pullmans. The seats were a rich-looking plush material. I watched the Negro porter transforming one seat into a comfortable-looking bed. The washbowls were a fine grade of mottled marble. Water was supplied to each bowl by an individual pump. The car was loaded to capacity with wealthy stockmen and, I suspect, a number of fancy women.

In the cramped quarters of the men's smoking room, a poker game was in progress. The high stakes, gold pieces and bills, were very much in evidence. I was particularly interested in one of the players. Fine clothes, careful barbering, diamond-decked fingers marked him as a gambler. His eyes spotted the lantern on my arm as I entered.

"Are you the brakeman?" he asked softly. He stopped the game and sent the porter for more wine.

"Just until we get to Dodge City," I replied. "The regular man got his arm broke making a coupling."

"Tough for him, but it gets you some extra money."

"He'll be laid up for a couple of months," I said. "I'm just helping out because the train would be shorthanded. I don't get paid. That'll go to the injured man."

The players seemed interested in the conversation. One of them, a cattle-owner, paid for the wine. He was wearing a buckskin vest with a huge golden chain and fob ornamenting it. Pearl-handled six-shooters nestled in inlaid holsters just below his fancy vest. Black broadcloth coat and trousers plainly indicated that he was a man of considerable wealth. I stared at the huge quantity of money displayed so carelessly on the table. When the players were ready to resume their game, I turned to leave the smoking room.

"Wait a few minutes if you can, young feller," the cattleman suggested. Then, turning to his companions: "Let's split a pot with the man who got hurt." His eyes glanced around the table.

"I'll add to it," the gambler said in his soft, whisperlike voice. "Aces or better to open the pot—half to the injured man, 10 percent to the kid who works in his place for nothing."

Again the nod went around the table. I watched the cards dealt. Hand after hand passed. The deal went around again and again. Steadily the pile of currency grew. Other passengers crowded around to watch the betting. The cattleman finally opened the pot (it may have been just a coincidence that the gambler dealt him the hand), and a three-cornered duel of wits began among the cattleman, the gambler, and a funereal-faced man dressed in somber black, whom I knew afterwards as a lawyer in Dodge City. Under fire the lawyer dropped out. When the showdown finally came, the cattleman laid down three queens and two jacks. The gambler exposed three kings and the other two jacks.

"Count the pot," was the cattleman's only comment. There was a trifle over eight hundred dollars.

The gambler beckoned me to his side. "Here's four hundred dollars for that hurt man—an' here's your 10 percent." He handed me two twenty-dollar bills. I stammered my thanks to the players and assured them that the injured man would have the money as soon as possible. (He had been given an opiate and taken off the train at Hutchinson.) I shall always remember that circle of smiling faces as I wished them luck.

I have forgotten the name of that injured brakeman, but I can never forget the disbelief with which he listened to my tale of where all that money came from.

"A godsend," he muttered over and over.

I certainly found my own forty dollars a godsend. The Santa Fe was three months in arrears on wage payment. An employee could sign up for meal tickets at company eating houses, but the landlord and all other bills had to be "stood off" for long periods at a time. It was not a very satisfactory way of working, but it was common to all railroads in those early days.

We arrived in Dodge City at two in the morning. I expected that the streets would be deserted; instead, they were crowded with men and women. Most of the women, of course, were of the half-world that flourished around the dance halls.

The streets were lit with coal oil lamps, or at least, that was the intention —most of them had been shot out. Shooting out a light was the height of cowboy humor. Not even the train lights, or our hand lanterns, were safe from the cowboys' casual practice shots.

Board sidewalks lined the two main streets. Ponies were tied to hitching racks in front of saloons and dance halls. Fiddles wheezed in the dance halls, and an occasional organ droned out dance music. Entrance to a dance hall was a simple matter: you tossed a dollar into a whiskey barrel that had already served its joyous purpose.

I made the round of the streets, looking for a place to sleep. One street was about four blocks long and ran east and west. Another ran from the depot, north and south, and divided the main east-west street about the middle. Alongside one of the east-west streets was a side track used for passing trains. The street facing the railroad tracks was thick with saloons and dance halls. A spur track led off from the main line to the stock corrals and loading pens, which were about a mile from the town proper.

Long-horned Texas cattle were carried eighteen head to a railroad car, and the stock corral at Dodge City held eighteen carloads—324 head—at a time. These loading pens were always busy. A single shipment might require several trains. Cowboys on horseback went on the gallop to and from the herd out on the prairie. Drovers, buyers, inspectors, cowboys, and railroadmen labored, cursed, and fought during the rush season.

During the time I worked out of Dodge City, I got to know the cowboys at work and at play. I saw cowboys ride herd when the dust must have made the air almost unbreathable. I knew their courage with the herd when the electric storms "made forked lightnin' play ring-around-a-rosy on m' hat," as one described it. Most of the cowboys of that time were young. They would not swerve an inch to make trouble—or to avoid it. Gunfights were common. We dreaded trips on cattle trains that included two or more different outfits. On such trains, the crews prudently stayed out of the caboose. Fights and gunfights started over trivial or fancied insults. One fight that left our caboose a total wreck started when a cowboy remarked: "I don't like to play cards with a dirty deck." A member of the rival outfit who had been forced to make the trip without an opportunity to clean up, understood the stranger to say "dirty neck," and he took offense. When the struggle had finally quieted and the smoke cleared away, three cowboys were badly wounded. The fourth got his neck washed by the coroner.

The train to which I had been assigned arrived in Dodge City a couple of hours after I did. My new conductor's name was Hirene. A miscue on a link-and-pin coupling had cost him most of the fingers of one hand, and this injury had never completely healed. The loss of his help in braking threw considerably more work upon me, the only brakeman. My other duties included everything that pertained to the movement of the train. I drew supplies for the caboose, filled its water tank and coal bins. I also shoveled coal to the engine tender—about three tons to the coaling. There were three coalings between Dodge City and Granada, two between Granada and Pueblo. After getting the engine coaled I would take my telegraph instrument, cut in on the box relay to get all necessary train orders, and deliver these to the conductor and engineer. I was earning every penny of my sixty-five dollars a month.

The proper speed for a freight train had been set at eighteen miles per hour, and that speed was checked by a recording device in each caboose. This device, known as a "Dutch clock," was probably the most unpopular invention known to train crews. There was no acceptable alibi for failing to keep within the speed limit recorded by the clock. It was not long, however, before we discovered that the Dutch clock could be jimmied. After we had started our run, about the first side track out of the terminal, we would uncouple the caboose and give it a good, hard slam into the standing train at eighteen miles per hour. The clock thereafter would continue to register eighteen miles per hour, no matter what speed we developed during the rest of the run.

Trains breaking in two were the bane of our existence. The link-and-pin couplings were liable to break under a pull or become uncoupled when slack ran forward. We worked with our ears cocked. A sudden change in the sound of the engine's exhaust meant trouble. At night, this change in exhaust effort was our only warning.

Break-in-two's called for every bit of railroading skill that was in a man. If the train broke apart in just one place, the action was simple. The brakeman "tied down" (stopped with his hand brakes) the section he happened to be riding on. The other section then backed up and coupled on to it. If the train broke in more than one place, however, the action was fast and complicated.

Another worry that aged trainmen prematurely was that we were held responsible for "flat wheels." This rule was never enforced to the limit, but for a number of years it was possible for a railroad company to deduct from the trainman's pay any damage he might have caused by setting the brakes too tight. The rule was finally broken by the railroad unions and by a lawsuit in which a trainman proved that after he had paid for a set of damaged wheels, the railroad had retreaded them and used them under a box car. The man collected a large sum as "rent" for the use of his wheels.

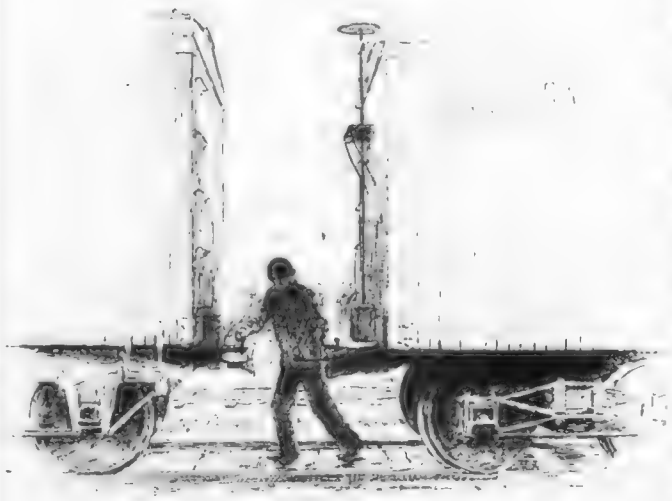
For all the problems and discomforts we experienced, I liked the prairie run with its ever-changing conditions. Dodge City was more than just a town to me: it was a real fusion of the deep South and the West, and no one could walk its turbulent streets without feeling the glamor of that meeting.

IN TIME, I HAD a bitter falling-out with the new general superintendent of the Santa Fe, a man by the name of H. R. Nickerson. So I walked out on my job with my first real, big-time railroad, and hired out as a brakeman on the Lawrence, Leavenworth & Galveston—the "Lazy, Lousy, and Greasy," in the railroadese of that time.

My first run was from Olathe to Ottawa, my next from Ottawa to Independence. When the railroad was finally completed through to Wellington. I was promoted—Conductor Harry French, just old enough to vote.

I was a freight conductor, of course, but I felt like a veteran railroadman. I had succeeded in raising a very imposing mustache, and I was popular in Ottawa, numbering friends by the dozen. Any railroadman was popular. The railroad meant prosperity to the community, and this reflected back in good will upon all railroad employees.

My favorite barber shop actually capitalized on my patronage. In this swanky shop an ornate rack, placed in plain view of the street, displayed the shaving mugs and razors of its patrons. Each mug and razor bore the name of its owner in shining gilt Germanic lettering. Those aspiring to vicarious fame could press their noses against the somewhat wavy glass window and ascertain that Con-



ductor Harry French of the LL&G was shaved in that shop.

Freak storms and unusual occurrences, then as now, were accepted as usual in Kansas. On one run south, Ottawa to Independence, we were stalled by a migration of grasshoppers. Great clouds of them actually darkened the sky, and masses piled on the tracks, making traction impossible for our locomotive. We shoveled and scraped to get by huge drifts of insects.

We also had horse trouble—a bank of eleven that seemed to think the railroad tracks were their special pasturage. Our train struck and killed seven on one trip. The return trip, northbound, eliminated the other four. It was impossible to stop the train soon enough with handbrakes. All the train crews were glad to be rid of those horses, even though the company had to pay for them.

I am sure our system of train handling and train orders would be considered very sketchy today. Rules were not standardized, and much confusion existed. A regular train might be ordered "canceled" for one day. If a need for that train developed, that "cancel" order might be "repealed." The train would then be sent out on its regular run.

One such series of orders—"cancel and repeal"—caused a head-on collision involving my train between Lenexa and Rosedale. We were carrying stock and running under orders to make all speed possible. In its hurry to get that stock delivered, the company even waived a check of the "Dutch clock." The opposing train was a Missouri, Fort Scott & Gulf regular that my train orders showed as "canceled" for that day.

The wreck occurred in one of those blinding, whirling snowstorms that only Kansas can produce. Both engine crews jumped before the impact, and no one was seriously hurt. But the engines collided with terrific force, and immediately afterward the wreck caught fire. The impact ditched a lot of our stock cars. Those that were not ditched were shaken enough to open the doors, and out poured a flood of longhorns, bawling with fright and rage. Some were injured, all were crazy-mad.

The engineer on our train, having sprained his ankle in "unloading," hobbled up to see how much damage had been done to his beloved engine. He was a short, fat man with a round, pointed stomach and a thick bush-beard that reached almost to the summit of the stomach. He had just about reached the engine when he heard the thud of hoofs behind him. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw the glitter of long horns through the swirling snowflakes. Forgotten was the beloved engine, the sprained ankle—he sprinted for the nearest telegraph pole with the grace and speed of a ten-second man. He actually gained on the steers. Grasping the pole with both hands, he went up it.

From the crossarm at the top of the pole, the engineer had a bird's-eye view, not only of the herd but also of the fireworks that came as the third act. The train we had hit was carrying a carload

An 1883 SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE *view of a "cattle drover."*

of oil directly behind the engine. As the barrels of oil grew hot, they exploded, scattering bursts of sparks and flame across the snowy countryside.

The cowboys in the caboose had been badly shaken up by the collision. They joined the train crews on the tops of the cars that remained upright. As fire spread through the wrecked trains, the cowboys made heroic efforts to free the steers imprisoned in the stockcars. No bullfighter ever found himself in a tougher spot. In groups of three or four, the cowboys would climb down off the car tops and open the doors that were still closed. It took iron nerve to get into those cars, amid those thrashing feet and tossing horns. If a steer was too badly injured to get up, a bullet put him out of his misery at once; otherwise he was routed out of the car. Most of the cars nearest the engine were on their sides, or nearly so, and here the cool nerve of those trained men saved a lot of beef. While a couple of them worked desperately to open the doors, two others would stand guard against the milling herd that wanted to charge everything that moved. If a steer went crazy, as

many of them did, one shot stopped his charge. With the coming of daylight the herd quieted. They strayed back along the right of way and made things miserable for the wrecking crew that arrived just before dawn.

HUNNEWELL WAS THE shipping point for all the LL&G cattle trade. The location of this cow town gave it many advantages for cattlemen shipping directly to the stockyards in Kansas City. The saving in time (as compared to Dodge City) became an important factor, and Hunnewell flourished.

The downtown section, as I remember it, had one hotel, two stores, one barber shop, a couple of dance halls, and eight or nine saloons. The town was Dodge City on a smaller scale. There was no Bat Masterson to control the casual use of firearms, so there was more shooting than I ever saw in Dodge City. Because of the nearby Indian reservation, where they could not be pursued by the local law enforcement authorities, the cowboys took more liberties than they would have elsewhere. The men of Hunnewell more than lived up to their reputation as hellraisers.

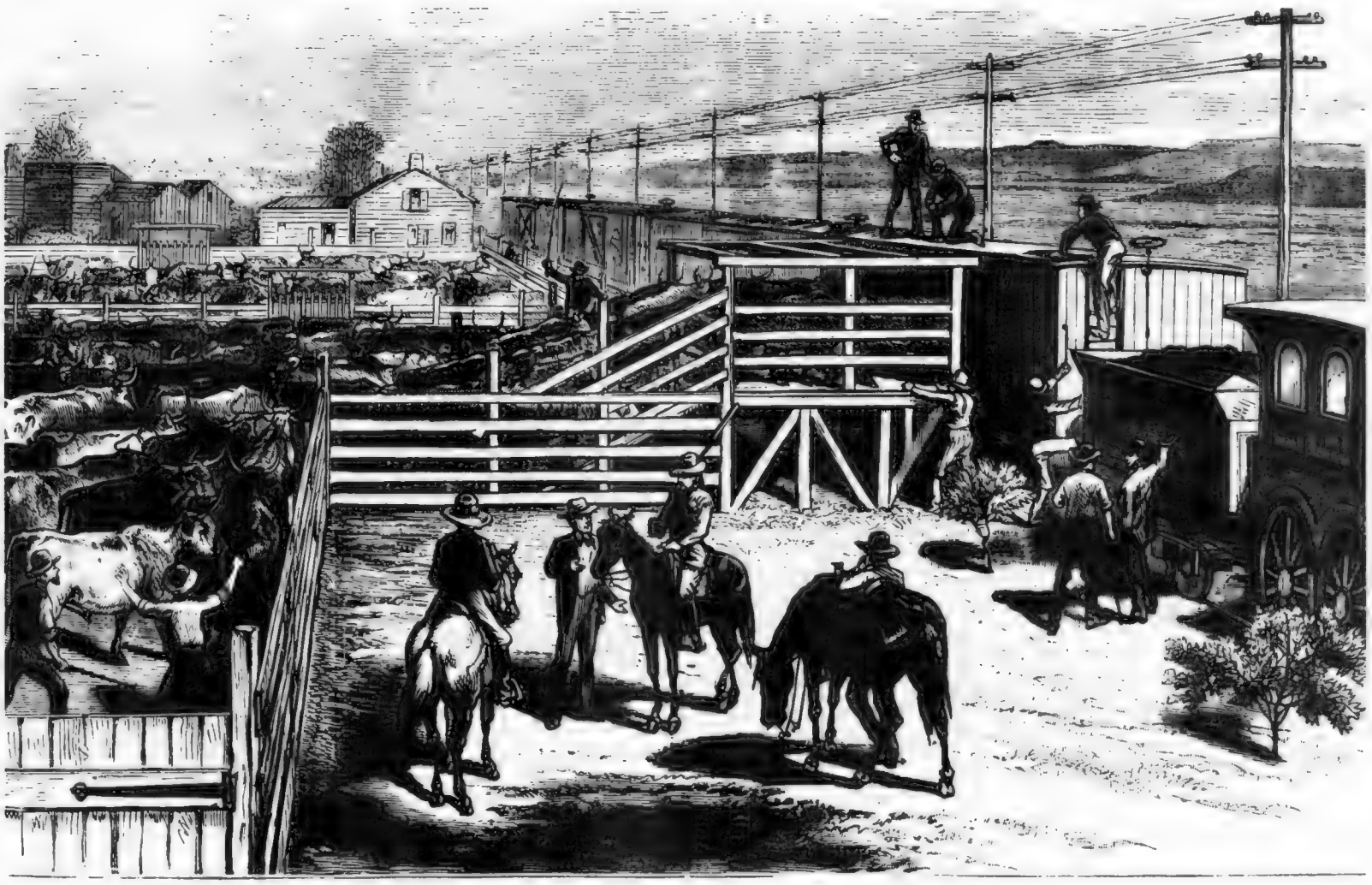
We railroadmen had the usual trouble keeping lights lit at night when cowboys were on a rampage. We would often get messages from the agent at Hunnewell, advising us to show no lights entering town. These were not idle warnings. A bevy of saloons faced the railroad tracks, and a light on our train—headlight, hand lantern, or caboose marker—was almost certain to draw a few practice shots.

While running into Hunnewell, I recommended the hiring of my elder brother as a brakeman. He was detailed to my crew, and in about three months I succeeded in making a passably good brakeman out of him. He had been warned about showing a light in Hunnewell; but one night when we entered the town, he forgot to put out his hand lantern. As he started to climb down off a box car, a pistol roared. The shooter must have been a couple of blocks away. Brother's light went out. He always claimed that the bullet had to pass between his legs in order to hit his lantern, but this point is debatable.

Brother threw the switch, and after our train was sidetracked, he reset it for the main line. We put our engine away in total darkness and then cleaned up ready for supper, but my brother did not show up. The other brakeman, a former cowboy, after a tour of all the saloons, notified me that he could not find him. An intensive search of the town failed to locate him. Daylight the next morning brought him walking into town carrying his bedroll. He had passed the night in a culvert a couple of miles from that "shootin'est" town.

And it *was* a shooting town. It was not uncommon for a group of whiskey-mad cowboys to take a violent dislike to some particular saloon or store. They

Cattle-loading, as seen in FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER, *1877.*



Loading Kansas pigs for the Chicago market (Scribner's Magazine, *1883*).

would mount their ponies, shoot up the town, and ride their horses full tilt into the offending saloon or place of business. Bartenders and clerks made themselves scarce. One spree lasted for three days and nights. It was more than a riot —the cowboys owned the town. They knocked the heads off sugar barrels so that the ponies might eat their fill. Guns blazed day and night.

Finally, the agent sent a wire to Wellington advising the sheriff of conditions. The sheriff assembled a few militia and a number of deputies, and headed for Hunnewell. I was the conductor of the special train. On arrival the sheriff lined up the militia and deputies, and ordered the cowboys to disperse. He and his "tin soldiers and toy men" were roundly jeered. Some fool fired a gun and a real fight started. The militia's first volley killed several cowboys and took much of the fight out of the others. By sundown the fight was over, and most of the cowboys were in Indian Territory.

My return trip to Wellington was to be as a fast stock train. (Fast was about thirty miles an hour.) Leaving town, I climbed into the cupola, where I could have the train under observation. On top of the caboose there was a stranger. I climbed out and asked him where he was going.

"As far as your damn train goes," was the surly reply.

I told him what the fare would be. Passengers on freight trains were not uncommon, and riding was permitted. But this stranger's hand slid down to his hip to produce the longest, ugliest six-shooter I have ever seen.

"This is my fare, runt," he growled.

While I did not like the reference to my size (about five foot six), that gun and his disposition convinced me they were all the fare he needed.

My rear brakeman, who had been building a fire in the caboose stove, missed me. Thinking something might be wrong with the train, he climbed the ladder on the front end of the caboose. This put him behind the gunman. When the brakeman's head cleared the top of the caboose, he saw the man toying with his huge shooting iron.

My brakeman took no chances. Softly, he continued climbing. A short brake club dangled at his wrist. The roar of the train silenced his two swift steps, and he swung his club in a short arc, ending on the gunman's derby hat. Mr. Gunman went down. His weapon dropped to the roof of the caboose and fired as it hit. The bullet made a hole in the cupola but did no other damage. I grabbed the gunman to keep him from rolling off the speeding train, and we tied him, unconscious, to the running board on top of the caboose, where he rode until we arrived at Wellington.

The sheriff came down at our invitation and looked over the prisoner.

"Which one of you took him?" he asked.

I motioned to the brakeman. "He was the artist with the brake club," I said. "All I did was look at the gun."

"You'll get a big share of the reward," the sheriff told the brakeman. "There's about two thousand dollars on his head."

The brakeman had been very unconcerned about his prisoner until he found out that he had captured a genuine bad man, one that was wanted in several localities for murder. Only then was he afraid. The day that the reward was divided marked the end of my brakeman's railroading. He took his share (about fifteen hundred dollars) and purchased a whole farm outfit—teams, wagons, horses, plows. The last I heard, he was located on a homestead at Burden, Kansas.

I kept the gun as a souvenir. At least I kept it until luck ran against me in a poker game. Easy come—easy go. &

"We lived on the car tops. . . ."

A Man, a Place, and a Time

Carey McWilliams (continued from page 8)

the farm labor saga but merely another chapter. As the defense program got under way, the despised Joads moved into the shipyards and the defense industries. In fact they proved to be a prime factor in the phenomenal wartime expansion of industry in California. Their presence, in such numbers, was nothing short of providential. As the Okies and Arkies moved into the defense centers, the growers began to clamor—beginning in the fall of 1941—for the return of the Mexicans. Soon the Mexicans came trooping back, first the *braceros* or contract-workers, and later a tide of wetbacks or illegal entrants which reached flood proportions—proportions which exceeded the dust bowl influx—after the Korean War. In 1942 the removal of 125,000 West Coast Japanese, citizens and aliens alike, to wartime relocation centers added to the pressure for farm labor and created still more jobs for the Okies. After Korea, there was a pause. Once again the Mexican wetbacks were rounded up by the thousands and shooed back across the border. But then a little brush-fire war started in Vietnam and once again the farm labor wheel took another spin. In brief one might say that three wars in the Pacific within the span of a single generation accomplished wonders for most Californians, including the Joads.

WE OFTEN speak of the 1930s as though the decade were all of one piece, which it was not. It had, as Steinbeck once noted, a beginning, a middle, and an end. It began of course in 1929, the year Steinbeck published *Cup of Gold*. The stock market crash came as a terrible shock but nothing much happened. A long period of shock, decline, stagnation and paralysis ensued in which things went from bad to worse. For quite a time, the stiff upper lip prevailed. Residents of Cincinnati wore buttons with the caption: "I'm sold on America. I won't talk depression." More shocking than the crash was the dawning realization that the economy continued to decline. The feeling began to spread that we had come to the end of the line. "There is no prairie, no mountain," wrote Stuart Chase in 1932, "no forest to which we can escape. . . . Our luck has run out; we have at last to face real things in a real world."

Various techniques exist to measure certain kinds of change, social, industrial, technological. But a change of consciousness is hard to measure. No one knows quite how the process occurs. "We entered the thirties," writes Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, "with a free-wheeling and autonomous economy and with no suspicion that there could be anything wrong with such a system or that it could ever come to an end. . . . When the Depression struck, we did not know what hit us or why. . . . Our received ideas were so deeply and widely held that we could not understand what was happening, and we could not figure out what to do about it." Here is E. J. Hobsbawm speaking on the same point: "The economists," he writes, "with what can only be described as a quiet heroism worthy of Don Quixote, nailed their flag to the mast of Say's law, which proved that slumps could not actually occur at all. Never did a ship founder with a captain and crew more ignorant of the reasons for its misfortune or more impotent to do anything about it." It was the growing awareness that this could be true, rather than agitation or propaganda, that forced some people to look about for an economic model that made more sense. "I went to New York," wrote the Californian, Lincoln Steffens, "to hear the semi-scientific captains of industry say in words and facial expressions that they did not know what had happened or what was to be done about it. They did not understand their own experiment. Then—not 'til then—did I give up—and turned to see what else there was."

It is not surprising that this growing disposition to seek out a new model for the economy was more widespread in California than elsewhere. California is like the rest of the country "only more so," but the qualifying phrase should never be forgotten. "What America is to Europe," Lord Bryce wrote, "what Western America is to Eastern, that California is to the other Western States." Long isolated from what he called the steadying influence of eastern states, California had been peopled by a "mixed multitude, bringing with it a variety of manners, customs, and ideas." The society that was formed there was, in his view, "more mobile and unstable, less governed by fixed beliefs and principles" than other areas he had visited. It was a state, he noted, that had a disposition to seek out perilous remedies for ancient evils. In part this was, and still is, true; California has always wanted to be the first state to reach the future, wherever and whatever the future may be. But it is also true because in California the contrasts between wealth and poverty, abundance and scarcity, could not be sharper and more apparent. When you have seen, as I have, tons and tons of citrus fruit being dumped in huge sumps, sprayed with tar to make them

"There is, I regret to report, but one thing wrong with the 'conspiracy theory,'— namely, I never met John Steinbeck."

inedible, then guarded by high barbed wire fences to make sure that some errant Mexican youngster is not tempted to steal an orange, it does begin to occur to you that something just might be wrong with the way the economy functions.

In September, 1933, Upton Sinclair, unnoticed by the press, quietly changed his registration from the Socialist to the Democratic Party. Then he wrote a pamphlet entitled "End Poverty in California" and, with this as his platform and program, announced that he would run for the Democratic nomination for Governor in 1934. Long before the August primary, it was apparent that he would win the nomination for by then, as Charles W. Van Devander pointed out, "the desperation of the times had coalesced all the dissident elements of the state into one great surging political movement." The EPIC campaign was a memorable California extravaganza. Sinclair, of course, was defeated in the November election, although he polled 879,000 votes. But in the course of his campaign, which was run by amateurs, he carried his simple, lucid message to every part of the state. Whatever his limitations, and they were numerous and exasperating, he knew how to speak and write in a clear and simple fashion. Thousands of Californians got the message.

In my personal political calendar, the thirties began to get interesting in 1934 with the EPIC campaign, a major farm labor strike in Imperial Valley, and the important San Francisco general strike of that year. Prohibition was at an end and the first New Deal reforms had been enacted. There had been a taxi strike in New York in February, 1934, and a year later, on January 5, 1935, Odets's *Waiting for Lefty* had its first performance before a largely middle class audience, few of whom had ever been connected with such an event as a union meeting. But at the end of the play, when the militant spokesman asked from the stage, "Well, what's the answer?" he was greeted by a spontaneous roar: "Strike! Strike!" That response, writes Harold Clurman in *The Fervent Years*, was "the birth cry of the thirties. Our youth had found its voice. It was a call to join the good fight for a greater measure of life in a world free of economic fear, falsehood, and craven servitude." From then on the upsurge of hope and enthusiasm accelerated.

On the authority of an army of imaginative historians, inventive investigators, and gabby informers we have been given to understand that the years of the middle thirties were rife with subversion and Red conspiracies. Let me tell you of one such conspiracy, of how John Steinbeck and I conspired to bring revolution and chaos to fertile farm valleys of California where social relations, of course, had been idyllic until we started making trouble. The conspiracy began, one might say, with the formation in October, 1938, of a Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers, later known with his approval as the Steinbeck Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers, of which I served as chairman. With the aid of the talent groups in Hollywood and the extremely effective support of Mr. and Mrs. Melvyn Douglas, the committee staged a memorable Christmas party that year for the children of migrant workers at the Farm Security Administration camp in Shafter, California. The party was a great success and helped focus state and national attention on the migrants and their problems. Then in the spring, *The Grapes of Wrath* was published and, a bit later, *Factories in the Field* appeared. This could hardly be coincidence, could it? The two books were greeted with a headline in the San Francisco *Examiner:*

REDS BLAMED FOR BOOKS ON MIGRANT LABOR

The Associated Farmers promptly denounced *The Grapes of Wrath* as obscene, vulgar, and immoral and its circulation was suppressed by Kern County librarians. But the attack shifted when *Factories in the Field* appeared. For as Arthur Eggleston noted in the San Francisco *Chronicle*, "the attempt to protect the morals of the reading public had to be abandoned in the face of this new, factual, historical and documented assault on the same problem which forms the central theme of Steinbeck's book." Now a kind of mass hysteria ensued, with a continuous attack being directed against both books through luncheons, mass meetings, and radio programs. Answering books and pamphlets with such titles as *Grapes of Gladness* and *Plums of Plenty* appeared in rich profusion. All of this frenzied activity, I am happy to report, greatly stimulated the sale of both books.

It should be kept in mind also that in January, 1939, Governor Olson had appointed me chief of the Division of Immigration and Housing, a unique state agency which, among other functions, had responsibility for the welfare of alien residents and enforcement of the Labor Camp Act, which, since the administration of Gov. Hiram Johnson, had gone virtually unenforced. I should add that in 1939 there were approximately 5,600 labor camps, most of them in agriculture, with a camp population in the peak periods of 160,000 workers. If loud bleats from organized farm groups be taken as a measure of effectiveness, we did a very good job in enforcing the Labor Camp Act. By way of add-

ing to my popularity I had held two historic wage-rate hearings in the San Joaquin Valley in 1939—the first, and I might add the last, hearings of this kind to be held in California. At one of these hearings I recommended that workers should not be cut off relief rolls unless growers were willing to pay 27½ cents an hour for cotton choppers or weeders, which represented an increase of 7½ cents over the rate first offered. The reaction, of course, was predictable. The columnist Elsie Robinson screamed in the San Francisco *Examiner:* "Get busy. Decide once and for all whether we're mice or men. Stop being played as suckers. Refuse to be taken for a ride. Throw every Red out of office." There were, in 1939, approximately 470 labor camps in the cotton growing areas of the San Joaquin Valley. And since the growers used a formula that each cabin was supposed to account for 800 pounds of cotton a day, this meant that each cabin would have to accommodate four pickers, with 200 pounds a day per picker being a good average. These camps were among the worst in the state and we were compelled to inspect them at frequent intervals. The growers did not welcome our attention. At one point the health officer in Madera County, a great favorite of the Associated Farmers, posted placards throughout the county reading: "Madera County Health Unit Boasts of 2,600 Cabins in Growers Labor Camps. To Hell with *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Factories in the Field*!" At the annual meeting of the Associated Farmers in December, 1939, the Steinbeck-McWilliams conspiracy to subvert rural California was wildly denounced. For example, I was castigated as: "Agricultural Pest No. 1 in California, outranking pear blight and boll weevil."

I think I have cited enough evidence—there is much more —to confirm the discovery by the Associated Farmers of a conspiracy by two authors to subvert California agriculture. But there is, I regret to report, one thing wrong with the conspiracy theory: namely, I never met John Steinbeck.

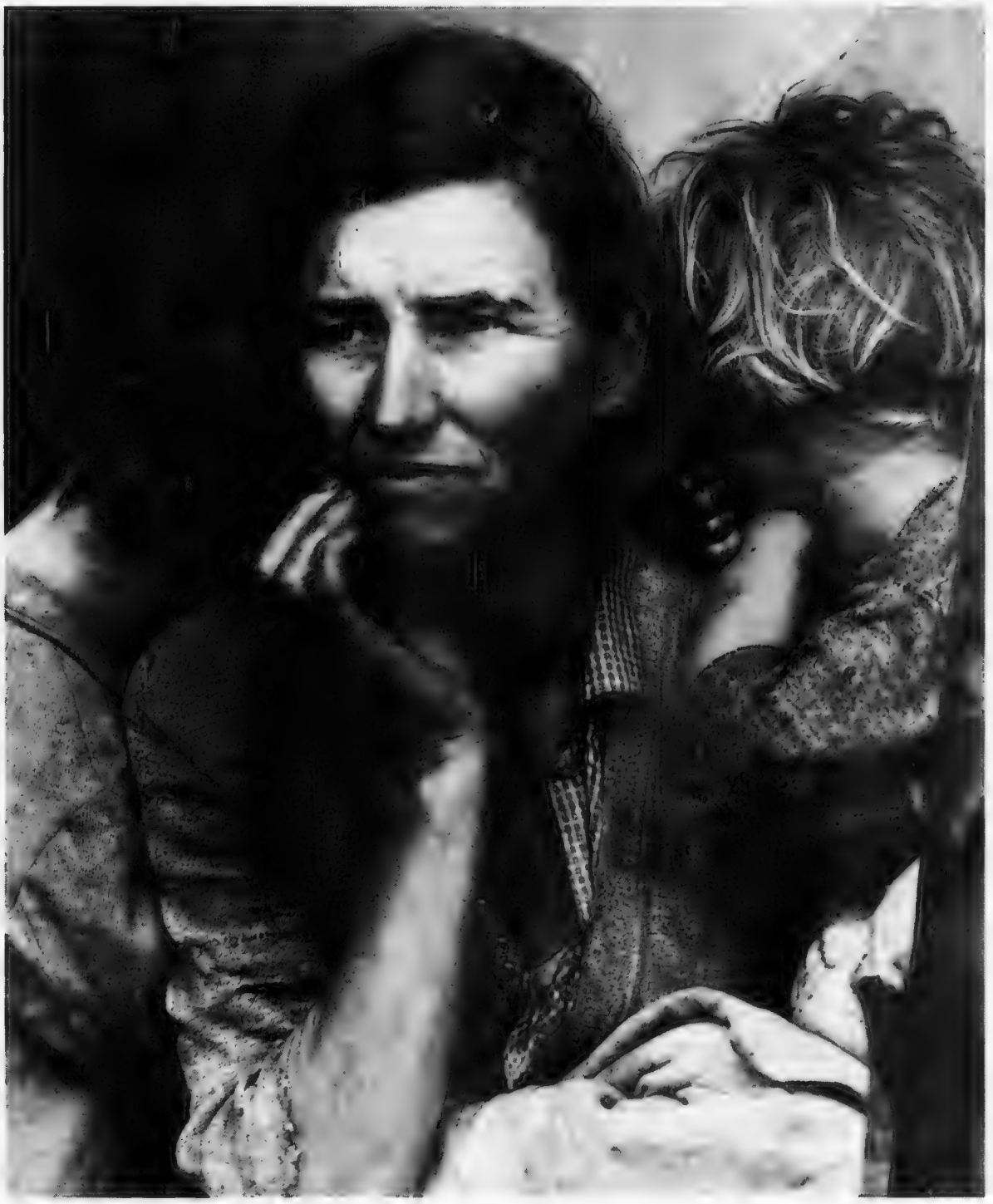
But since so many reputations—political and literary—have been built on conspiracy theories in general, it would be cruel and malicious to undermine this one. So I will, in this spirit, add a few details to my confession. A scroll on the state capitol in Sacramento reads: "Bring Me Men to Match My Mountains" and every now and then such men actually emerge in California, not many but a few. Simon J. Lubin was such a man. He was the son of David Lubin, a wealthy pioneer Sacramento merchant—of the Weinstock-Lubin Department Store—who had gotten interested in agriculture and had formed one of the first of the California cooperative marketing associations. After graduation from Harvard, Simon J. Lubin spent some years traveling in Europe. Later, while living in a settlement house in New York, he had acquired a deep and lifelong interest in immigrants and the working poor. It was Lubin who induced Gov. Hiram Johnson in 1912 to set up the Commission—as it was then called —of Immigration and Housing; in fact he wrote the enabling legislation and served for ten years, without pay, as chairman of the commission, resigning only when he found it impossible to run the commission along the lines he had originally projected. Apart from all this, Lubin was a wonderful person, warm, charming, generous, kindly; a man who never lost his feeling of sympathy and compassion for the poor and the oppressed. So when he died, on April 15, 1936, some of us decided to set up the Simon J. Lubin Society in his honor. The moving spirits in the effort were Helen Hosmer, Omer Mills, Fred Soule, and Jonathan Garst, all of whom had been or were connected with the Farm Security Administration which ran the FSA camp program in California.

The society set out to demonstrate the real nature of the controls which operated in the field of industrialized agriculture. In the process it tried to convince the small farmers, with some slight success, that they were only injuring their own best interests when they joined with the larger growers in suppressing efforts to organize farm workers. It did not try to organize farm workers, but it did explain why they should be permitted to organize. The society was quite active in the period from 1936 to 1940 (it faded out, of course, with World War II) and published during these years a fine newsletter, *The Rural Observer,* edited by Helen Hosmer. It also issued some excellent studies and pamphlets, including a reprint of the seven articles on farm labor which Steinbeck wrote for the San Francisco *News* under the title *The Harvest Gypsies.* The reprint, a 33-page pamphlet entitled *Their Blood Is Strong,* enjoyed a large sale and is today a collector's item.

In the fall of 1938, the Society brought out a special issue of *The Rural Observer* devoted to the Associated Farmers—the first detailed, thorough study of the organization to appear in print. The objective was twofold: to provide some ammunition that might be of assistance to Culbert L. Olson in his campaign; and second, to induce the LaFollette Committee to investigate farm labor conditions in California. The issue had a huge success; upwards of one hundred thousand copies were distributed throughout the state. Olson, of course, was elected, but it was touch-and-go whether the LaFollette Committee would come to California. Throughout the fall of 1938, I worked with selected staff members, helping them line up possible witnesses, assembling material for them, outlining the scope of the proposed investigation. We had hoped that the committee would start hearings before the November election, but this was not to be. Once the Olson administration took over, a renewed effort was made to get the committee to visit California. By then the committee was willing, but the necessary appropriation was not forthcoming. Jerold S. Auerbach, in his book on the LaFollette Committee *(Labor and Liberty: The LaFollette Committee and the New Deal,* 1966, p. 180) says that it was the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Factories in the Field* in the spring of 1939, and the nation-wide attention they aroused in farm labor, that finally tipped Congressional opinion in favor of giving the committee its appropriation. *Cont'd on page 62*

Migrant Mother: 1936

By Paul Taylor



In the dark night of the depression, the intuition of a sensitive woman-with-a-camera led her to a pea-pickers' camp, a desperate mother, and a photograph whose impact would help form laws to save thousands of similar Dust Bowl refugees—and create a legend for Dorothea Lange.

XUM

"Ragged, ill, emaciated by hunger, 2,500 men, women and children are rescued after weeks of suffering by the chance visit of a Government photographer."
San Francisco News, *March 10, 1936*

THE PHOTOGRAPHER had made her way to the *News* office with hardly-dry prints in hand. The editor lost no time notifying the United Press. The UP immediately contacted relief authorities, who sent a representative to the pea-pickers' camp at Nipomo to tell the faintly cheering pickers that food was on its way from Los Angeles.

Then the *News* published the story, with two poignant photographs of a starving mother and her children beside a lean-to tent shelter. Their car had been stripped of tires, which were sold to buy food. Beside the photographs was a column detailing the story, with a cross-reference to the lead editorial, "Starving Pea Pickers."

With the news in print, the editor acknowledged the photographer's effectiveness in a sincerely appreciative letter accompanied by clippings of photographs, news, and editorial columns. Nowhere in the newspaper did the name of the photographer appear; in those days photographers were anonymous.

The above occurred during the Great Depression, when unemployment was at its historic peak. Drought across the Great Plains added its scourge, driving families from their dry homesteads to western irrigated lands which opened no door to homesteading again. The Ozark hills, too, were dry; farmers' sons who left earlier for northern industry were forced back when the factories closed, and others were "tractored out" as machines began to replace men across the farmlands of Texas and Oklahoma. All joined the tide flowing westward. Anyone could do farm work in the irrigated valleys of the West; skill was not required. Employment was brief, intermittent, and shifting in location. Pay was meager, but the labor force was reshuffled at each location and at each seasonal peak, so everybody had a fresh chance in the lottery of the glutted labor market—first come first served. In the virtual absence of furnished housing, the migrants squatted by roadside, creek bank, in the brush, or on the town dump, until work was finished and they moved on to the next crop.

The New Deal was not supine. FDR assured the nation there was nothing to fear but fear itself, and the government assumed leadership. As Regional Labor Advisor of the newly-organized Resettlement Administration, I was invited by the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco to address its Friday luncheon in August, 1935. In the speech, I tried to capture the temper of the times:

> A new common refrain has appeared in the headlines of our newspapers. We are told that California is meanced by an "influx of indigents," of "paupers," of "jobless." A Los Angeles columnist cries in alarm: "That 5000 indigents are coming into southern California . . . leaves one appalled. This is the greatest problem before the United States . . . these tattered migrations." Lamenting our good roads he adds: "The Chinese, wiser than we, have delayed building a great system of highways for that very reason—to head off these dangerous migrations—indigent people stampeding from the farms into cities to live on charity." In June an aroused state assembly passed a bill to debar from California "indigents and persons likely to become public charges," but cooler counsel prevailed in the Senate and the bill failed to become law.

In closing I proposed a program of public camps for migrants, to accord minimum decencies to the workers and access to health and other public agencies of the time:

> The prompt elimination of squatter camp conditions is vital to the interests of all. Squatters' camps are a menace to public health, to social health, and to good labor relations in agriculture. They are a fertile source of discontent, breeders of grievances and feeders of unrest. Their existence is a challenge to our society. They *can* be abolished.

The camp program was initiated first in California, then expanded across the nation. The polarization of the time was revealed in its popular reception. An editorial in the San Francisco *News* on February 13, 1936—barely a month before the photograph of "Migrant Mother" appeared—pointed critically to one extreme:

> When Washington comes forward with funds to build needed camps the Resettlement Administration is greeted with hostility and distrust instead of cooperation by some of the richest and most influential groups in the State. Their attitude disgraces California. . . . Will not the conscience and intelligence of California find some way to express themselves in rebuke of those who would leave the farm labor problem to vigilantes and the brutality of blind economic forces?

Another extreme was represented in a letter to the editor of the Redding, California, *Independent* of November 27, 1935; after making some most unflattering references to me as promoter for the program, the author proceeded to outline what he saw as an insidious plot against the workers:

> Now, Dear Editor, where did this notion that these camps were "for the pickers" originate? Did it originate where that old American ideal of "comfortable quarters" for the slaves originated? That is, in the minds of those who owned the slaves, the quarters and the jobs? . . . And can you tell me how a man can get a doctor's degree in economics and make statements so far from the economic facts and their inescapable conclusions as this bunk of Doctor so-and-so: that these camps are going to do anything but reduce the wages of the pickers and make possible the segregation of the meek, the humble, and the willing workers from the independent pickers who see through these false claims of benefit to the workers, who do not own or control their jobs or the rate of wages any more than did the men who occupied "quarters" in 1850?

XUM

Was it mere "chance" that Dorothea Lange, a government photographer, brought about the rescue of starving pea-pickers at Nipomo? Can the answer be so simple?

First, there was the photographer herself. She was not just a woman with a camera. From youth she had always known that she would be a photographer. The impulse came from the depths. In retrospect she explained that she was "compelled to photograph as a direct response to what was around" her. To the question, "What are you going to do with photographs?" she recommended the answer, "Don't let that question stop you, because ways often open that are unpredictable, if you pursue it far enough." Artists, she generalized, "are controlled by the life that beats in them, like the ocean beats in on the shore. They're almost pursued." All this comes through in Dorothea's own account of "Migrant Mother" on page 46. Having convinced herself while driving twenty miles beyond the pea-pickers' camp that she could continue on, she turned about "like a homing pigeon," drove back to the camp, and parked her car by the tent of the "hungry and desperate mother." As intimate, intense, and vital as it is, Dorothea's account leaves open, as much as it closes, the answer to the question, Was it "chance"?

Dorothea Lange was a "government photographer," as the *News* editorial said. How did that happen? Was *that* "chance"? There was the New Deal, and the New Deal had purpose. In January, 1935, the Rural Rehabilitation Division of the California State Emergency Relief Administration asked me, as field director, to conduct research to recommend a suitable program.

"What staff would you need?" they asked.

"Well, about three or four assistants and a photographer."

"Why do you need a photographer? Would social scientists generally ask for a photographer?"

"No," I acknowledged, "they would not." I explained that I wanted to bring from the field itself visual evidence of the nature of the problem to accompany my textual reports made to those unable to go into the field but responsible for decision.

The office manager suspended further discussion of the usefulness of a photographer when he put Dorothea Lange on the payroll as a typist. In the budget no provision had been made for a photographer. The matter was not closed;

THE SAN FRANCISCO NEWS

Ragged, Hungry, Broke, Harvest Workers Live in Squallor

FOOD RUSHED TO STARVING FARM COLONY

Thousand Jobless Pea Pickers Cheer as Six Weeks of Want Are Ended

By United Press

NIPOMO, March 10.—A ragged army of pea pickers set up a faint cheer today at news that the Federal Government is rushing them supplies of food to ward off the threat of starvation.

Faces of the destitute field workers, stranded by a crop failure, brightened when a United Press correspondent brought word that 20,000 pounds of food were en route here from Los Angeles.

"How we need it!" exclaimed J. W. Carpenter, the camp boss.

For six weeks the workers—more than 1000 of them—have been stranded without funds, adequate clothing or food. Two weeks of steady rain, causing a rust blight, despoiled the pea crop and cut off their source of earnings.

For Editorial Comment turn to Page 14.

Previous reports that San Luis Obispo County had been caring for them were denied by Mr. Carpenter, a former Little Rock, Ark., resident who came West many months ago to join the nomadic army of workers who follow the seasonal pea crops from the Imperial Valley to Idaho.

Two Days Work in Six Weeks

Mr. Carpenter insisted the workers had been left to shift for themselves.

"We have been keeping body and soul together by taking cauliflower and whatever other kind of vegetables we can get from neighboring fields," he said.

Sprawled across the brow of a hill was a string of dirty tents in which the laborers have been living. Indicating the squalor, the camp boss continued:

"We have worked only two days in six weeks. We got an average of about 75c each for the two days.

Scores of weary, discouraged and hungry families such as these today awaited the arrival of food at a pea pickers' camp near Nipomo after fighting starvation for six weeks following crop failures.

(See article in adjoining column.)

TESTIMONY BY GOFF ATTACKED

Old Police Reports Produced by Defense at Mooney Hearing

Police reports, followed by age, were produced at the Tom Mooney habeas corpus hearing today by George T. Davis, defense attorney, in an attempt to repudiate testimony

My Day

By Eleanor Roosevelt

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.

WE HAD a very peaceful trip to Detroit. My secretary and I went into the diner and everyone was most polite and paid no attention to us. I was so sleepy after dinner that after reading for a while, I had our compartment made up and forced poor Mrs. Scheider to go to bed at the early hour of 9:30.

Just as we pulled into Detroit a young man came aboard and said the vice-president of the Pere Marquette Railroad, Mr. R. J. Bowman, was going to Grand Rapids and of-

Paul De Kruif and Miss Murray, state chairman of the women's division of the WPA, were with me.

16,440 HARVEST JOBS IN SIGHT

Employment Will Take Care of Discharged WPA Workers, Says McLaughlin

A survey of jobs in agricultural sections that will be open during the next three months indicate more than enough work to take care of persons now being discharged from

"I like to think how nice it's gonna be, maybe, in California. Never cold. An' fruit ever'place, an' people just bein' in the nicest places, little white houses in among the orange trees. I wonder—that is, if we all got jobs an' all work—maybe we can get one of them little white houses. An' the little fellas go out an' pick oranges right off the tree. . . ."

"We got a bitter road . . . . We got a long bitter road ahead."

—*Ma Joad in* The Grapes of Wrath

Dorothea was allowed to remain on the payroll, but on a trial basis for a month.

Before the probationary month expired, the rural rehabilitation director, Harry E. Drobish (later a state senator), met with the California State Emergency Relief Commission to discuss the program. In his hand Drobish held a report recommending construction of camps for migratory laborers, documented with photographs. After these photographs were passed around the table, the commission voted $200,000 to initiate the program. The question was not raised again, Why a photographer?

Paul S. Taylor, *who married Dorothea Lange in 1935, was then regional labor advisor of the resettlement administration and helped formulate legislation for the relief of migrant laborers. He is professor emeritus of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, an agrarian historian, and a nationally recognized authority on reclamation law, farm labor history, and the uses of irrigation. His more recent consulting service for the federal government has taken him to such diverse regions as Viet Nam and Peru, and he is the author (with Dorothea Lange) of* American Exodus: A Study in Human Erosion *(1942), which—like John Steinbeck's* The Grapes of Wrath *and Carey McWilliams's* Factories in the Fields*—has become a literary and historical landmark from the years of depression in the West.* American Exodus *has recently been republished in a revised edition by the Yale University Press and the Oakland Museum.*

Dorothea Lange *learned her art from and with some of the greatest names in American photography, including Arnold Genthe, Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Willard Van Dyke, and Walker Evans. Through more than thirty years of government and private photography, she produced a body of work that placed her—with them—among the handful of truly great artists with the camera. "Photographs," she once said, "seem to have a life-span. By this I mean that only a few survive and go on functioning as images in their own right and on their own." "Migrant Mother" is only one of hundreds of living images she left as her legacy by the time of her death in 1965.*

Photo by Paul Taylor, 1936.

The Assignment I'll Never Forget

BY DOROTHEA LANGE

WHEN I BEGAN thinking of my most memorable assignments, instantly there flashed to mind the experience surrounding "Migrant Mother," an experience so vivid and well remembered that I will attempt to pass it on to you.

As you look at the photograph of the migrant mother, you may well say to yourself, "How many times have I seen this one?" It is used and published over and over, all around the world, year after year, somewhat to my embarrassment, for I am not a "one-picture photographer."

Once when I was complaining of the continual use and reuse of this photograph to the neglect of others I have produced in the course of a long career, an astute friend reproved me. "Time is the greatest of editors," he said, "and the most reliable. When a photograph stands this test, recognize and celebrate it."

"Migrant Mother" was made twenty-three years ago, in March, 1936, when I was on the team of Farm Security Administration photographers (called "Resettlement Administration" in the early days) . . . . It was the end of a cold, miserable winter. I had been traveling in the field alone for a month, photographing the migratory farm labor of California —the ways of life and the conditions of these people who serve and produce our great crops. My work was done, time was up, and I was worked out.

It was raining, the camera bags were packed, and I had on the seat beside me in the car the results of my long trip, the box containing all those rolls and packs of exposed film ready to mail back to Washington. It was a time of relief. Sixty-five miles an hour for seven hours would get me home to my family that night, and my eyes were glued to the wet and gleaming highway that stretched out ahead. I felt freed, for I could lift my mind off my job and think of home.

I was on my way and barely saw a crude sign with pointing arrow which flashed by me at the side of the road, saying PEA-PICKERS CAMP. But out of the corner of my eye I *did* see it.

I didn't want to stop, and didn't. I didn't want to remember that I had seen it, so I drove on and ignored the summons. Then, accompanied by the rhythmic hum of the windshield wipers, arose an inner argument:

Dorothea, how about that camp back there?

What is the situation back there?

Are you going back?

Nobody could ask this of you, now could they?

To turn back certainly is not necessary. Haven't you plenty of negatives already on the subject? Isn't this just one more of the same? Besides, if you take a camera out in this rain, you're just asking for trouble. Now be reasonable, etc., etc.

Having well convinced myself for twenty miles that I could continue on, I did the opposite. Almost without realizing what I was doing, I made a U-turn on the empty highway. I went back those twenty miles and turned off the highway at that sign, PEA-PICKERS CAMP.

I was following instinct, not reason; I drove into that wet and soggy camp and parked my car like a homing pigeon.

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.

The pea crop at Nipomo had frozen and there was no work for anybody. But I did not approach the tents and shelters of other stranded pea-pickers. It was not necessary; I knew I had recorded the essence of my assignment.

This, then, is the "Migrant Mother" photograph with which you are so familiar. It has, in a sense, lived a life of its own through these years; it goes on and on. The negative now belongs to the Library of Congress, which controls its use and prints it. Whenever I see this photograph reproduced, I give it a salute as to an old friend. I did not create it, but I was behind that big, old Graflex, using it as an instrument for recording something of importance. The woman in this picture has become a symbol to many people; until now it is her picture, not mine.

What I am trying to tell other photographers is that had I not been deeply involved in my undertaking on that field trip, I would not have had to turn back. What I am trying to say is that I believe this inner compulsion to be the vital ingredient in our work; that if our work is to carry force and meaning to our view we must be willing to go all-out.

"Migrant Mother" always reminds me of this, although I was in that camp for only ten minutes. Then I closed my camera and *did* go straight home.

—From *Popular Photography*, February, 1960, Volume 46, Number 2.

XUM

PAGE 48
A Matter of Opinion

Insurrection and Rebellion—In Reply

To the Editor:

I have just read your article, "A State of Insurrection and Rebellion—A Personal Response to an Encounter with Law and Order," in the January, 1970, issue of THE AMERICAN WEST.

There can be no quarrel with your right to describe your emotional response to a personally experienced incident during the course of the People's Park controversy. Nor can there be any question about the propriety of your drawing such analogies with the past or such lessons for the future from a set of facts as you can rationally support and defend. But, as a minimum, the validity of an analogy or inference presupposes some acquaintance with the facts from which they are drawn.

The simple truth is that the two paragraphs in your article in which you purport to "outline the story" of "what happened in Berkeley, California, in May of 1969" are so riddled with inaccuracies and so conveniently free of key facts essential to any understanding of the sequence of events as to constitute a parody of the principles of historical scholarship.

To detail all of these omissions and inaccuracies would require more time and energy than I care to devote to this enterprise. Two examples will have to suffice. After noting the appropriation of the University's parcel of land in a hopelessly oversimplified one-sentence description, you write "On May 13, university authorities declared that the lot was to be transformed into a multiple-use recreation facility. . . ." That just happened to be the long-established interim use for which the University had been authorized to acquire the property over the course of the preceding two years. Its ultimate permanent use for student housing had been a part of the University's approved master plan for more than a decade.

The second example appears two sentences later: "On May 15, some three thousand *demonstrators marched* on the park, *to all appearances* intent on tearing down the fence" (emphasis mine). What an incredibly bland description of the action of a mob of 3,000 which rushed toward the park, surrounded a total of 75 police officers dispersed in small squads around the perimeter of the site, and subjected them to a barrage of rocks, stones, bricks, and reinforcing steel bars cut to missile-size lengths for the purpose. Dozens of these officers were injured and many lay immobilized or unconscious in the streets before a squad of deputies was equipped with shotguns and authorized to move in and extricate them.

That such an utterly erroneous "outline" of this historical event should appear in the underground press is to be understood and expected. That it should appear in a journal allegedly devoted to historical scholarship is a travesty of the "historian's self-imposed stance of objectivity."

William C. Hanley
City Manager
Berkeley, California

To the Editor:

I was very unpleasantly surprised to note in the January issue of THE AMERICAN WEST an apparent change in your editorial policy which would indicate a shift from pure history to sociology. I refer, of course, to your new Page 48 and to the article headed "A State of Insurrection and Rebellion," in which both the photographs and text are rather heavily slanted toward discrediting the lawful forces of the police and the National Guard and show sympathy with the disruptive Far Left element which is rapidly dragging this country toward oblivion.

W. H. Galbraith
Sun City, California

To the Editor:

When I subscribed to THE AMERICAN WEST it was not my intention to engage in the promotion of the philosophical posture of any group: religious, political, scientific, artistic, or other.

I have just received the January issue of your magazine. I am astonished to be bombarded from cover to cover with moralization, editorialization, and an exaggerated effort to rationalize a segment of the history of America in terms of some preconception of social order or juvenile contemporary triviality.

Your inclusion of emotional diatribe relative to present social problems of California is disgusting and irrelevant unless I misunderstood the implication of your advertised title. If your subject matter is to include the present day stupidities of spoiled adolescents in the West, which it apparently does, that would be insufferable.

D. C. Taulman
Fort Worth, Texas

This page, A MATTER OF OPINION, *is provided as an open forum. Contributions are invited, but should be limited to 750 words and must be signed.*

THE AMERICAN WEST REVIEW

To Gold across the Devil's Backbone

BY RICHARD DILLON

SEVEN YEARS AGO, Ralph Moody wrote a popular survey of far-western travel entitled *The Old Trails West*. It proved to be a delight, as are all books by that talented writer, but the volume had two flaws. Both resulted from sins of omission rather than commission and hardly major ones, at that, at least to casual readers of American history. But to far-gone aficionados of western Americana, addicts of the genre, they seemed genuinely serious. One was the complete lack of mention of the Siskiyou Trail, which connected Oregon and California after Hudson's Bay Company fur brigades blazed the route, and the other was the too brief treatment accorded to the trans-Mexico trails of the forty-niners. Moody did justice to the all-land but sometimes American, sometimes Mexican Gila Trail, but left out entirely the more southerly routes which lay completely within the borders of Mexico. Small wonder, however, that a survey of the whole field of western trails should slight these two areas.

A volume on the Siskiyou Trail is currently being written for the "American Trails Series," but we need not wait an instant longer for a volume on the "missing" Mexican trails. *The El Dorado Trail* is it, and it is an excellent book. A. B. (Bud) Guthrie, editor of the "American Trails Series" for McGraw-Hill, has once again chosen an author who can both research and write, a man whose book is both entertainment and a contribution to history. Purists may be annoyed by the title given the Mexican trail (or, better, trails), for "El Dorado Trail" is a made-up term, a name created by the author, first to suggest that the California gold fever was an extension—or a realization—of the old Hispanic legend of the Gilded Man of Cundinamarca, and second to reduce to practical comprehension the bewildering network of trails, mostly nameless, leading west from Texas points and the Mexican Gulf Coast. These ran either to the Colorado River's Yuma crossing or to such ports of the Pacific littoral as Acapulco, San Blas, and Mazatlán. Picky pedants may find a typo or two and perhaps a misspelled or mis-accented Spanish proper name, but they will not be able to fault Egan's documentation. They will have to get their enjoyment out of criticism of certain literary devices which he has employed to perk up his narrative, mainly the posing of hypothetical questions which his travelers answer in bona fide, documented quotations.

The copy is tight and clean in a day of hasty and sloppy editing, but the design of the book, unhappily, leaves something to be desired—particularly in its lack of adequate illustration. Where, for example, are the charming woodcuts of yesteryear, the original artwork of such titles as Jonathan Daniels' *The Devil's Backbone*? There is not a single signature of photographs or engravings. In particular, the lack of a detailed map is annoying. (There is only a rough sketch map of Mexico—and a suggestion of the trails—on the flyleaves.) In a book about *trails*, and a pioneering effort to boot, this is a grave error. On the other hand, the physical appearance of the book is far more attractive than run-of-the-press trade books today.

Ferol Egan has a sharp eye for anecdote and a good ear for quotes. His style is literary, but he steers clear of purplish prose. Best of all, he has the ability to combine and integrate disparate elements into a single account. His device is to lump the maze of trails into just three general routes: northern, central, and southern. The first was a tangle of feeder trails from El Paso del Norte, Mier, and elsewhere to Guadalupe Pass and the frontier outpost of Janos, after which they coalesced pretty much into the Gila Trail. The central road ran from lower Río Grande River points to Parras and thence up and over the Sierra Madre Occidental via Durango to switchback down to San Blas and the sea, as well as from Tampico to Lagos and thence over the Sierra to San Blas. The little-used southern crossing began in Vera Cruz, passed through Mexico City, and ended in Acapulco.

What made it hard for the author to synthesize without being repetitious was the lack of any overall study of prior years to lean on. The two "major" books on the subject probably were Glenn Dumke's *Mexican Gold Trail* and this reviewer's *The Gila Trail*, both of which were mere editings of major overland journals. So Egan's feat in documenting the Mexican trails of '49 is all the more remarkable.

Readers familiar with overland trail literature will recognize certain published diarists, such as John W. Audubon, John Durivage, Charles Pancoast, *Mexican Gold Trail*'s George W. B. Evans, and *The Gila Trail*'s Benjamin B. Harris. But these are balanced with fresh detail from diaries and letters in the Bancroft Library and elsewhere by previously unheard-of travelers. Among the characters encountered by the reader are such colorful and fairly familiar figures as Josiah Gregg; scalp-hunters John Glanton and James Kirker; her ladyship, the Great Western; and that most ruffianly of the many humbugs of the time, Parker H. French. (One wonders how the author managed to hold back his exasperation with such a brawling and bigoted crew of gringo Argonauts. Contemptuous of Mexicans because of their race and religion, always complaining,

Continued on page 61

The El Dorado Trail: The Story of the Gold Rush Routes across Mexico by Ferol Egan *(McGraw-Hill, "American Trails Series," New York, 1970; 313 pp., biblio., notes, index, $7.95).*

Looking Westward

BY JOSEPH E. ILLICK

SLOWLY BUT INEXORABLY through the 1960s there grew the painful awareness that something was radically wrong in the land. Capturing much of the public's attention—and sometimes inspiring its fear—were the more dramatic movements of the decade: the civil rights struggle in the South, the antiwar demonstrations, and the development of the Black Power movement. Confrontation produced confrontation; extremists of the left and the right fed discontent; and today, on the brink of the 1970s, we remain anxious, confused, angry, and divided—uncertain whether the present crisis is an outgrowth of long-term trends in our national history or a development stemming from new and unforeseen conditions.

Now we begin to face another development, a modern reflection of one of the oldest unresolved problems in the West: the rise of the "new" militant Indian, whose determination to carve out his own place in mainstream America has been recently, and dramatically, evidenced by the seizure of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. One of the movement's most vigorous intellectual spokesman is Vine Deloria, a Standing Rock Sioux, former executive director of the National Congress of American Indians and author of **Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto** *(Macmillan, $5.95)*—a harsh, sometimes overstated, but frequently effective illumination of the past and present condition of the Indian in white America.

Seeking to put the Indian wars of the nineteenth century in perspective, Deloria falls into polemic: "America has always been a militantly imperialistic world power eagerly grasping for economic control over weaker nations." To make certain the thrust of his argument is recognized, he adds, "It would take Russia another century to make and break as many treaties as the United States has already violated." There is no doubt in his mind that this country was founded on violence, which must be met by a force he vaguely defines as intellectual warfare.

On the other hand, Deloria explicitly rejects the tactic of countering violence with more violence, here parting company with militant blacks. Although he points out that most Indians now live in cities, he sees little similarity between their problems and those of Negroes, urban or rural:

> The black needs time to develop his roots, to create his sacred places, to understand the mystery of himself and his history, to understand his own purpose. These things the Indian has and is able to maintain through his tribal life. The Indian now needs to create techniques to provide the economic strength needed to guarantee the survival of what he has.

Perhaps because he believes the Indian would fare best if left alone (though at the same time he holds the contradictory view that it is "quite unfair that churches and government agencies concentrated their efforts primarily on the blacks"), Deloria's prescription for future Indian-white relations is less substantial than his analysis of past mistakes and his warnings of present dangers.

He is, as might be expected, harshly critical of government policies and agencies. He is surprisingly bitter toward anthropologists, whose "fundamental thesis . . . is that people are objects for observation [and thus] for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction." He is less biting, but more convincing, when he dissects the conflict between Christian missionaries and Indians. Indeed, this section is the best in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (suddenly the aptness of the title is obvious), due probably to Deloria's theological training among Lutherans.

If every chapter were of this high quality, Deloria would have produced a first-rate and much needed account. Unfortunately, the writing is quite uneven, as anecdotes and flippant remarks vie with thoughtful analysis for the reader's attention. Due to this lack of discipline, there is no compelling thesis but a far too simple assumption that Indians are good and whites are bad. Of course, there is an implicit argument regarding cultural conflict, but it is not clearly drawn or used as an analytical tool. Had it been, Deloria might have depicted government agents and anthropologists as products of the same milieu, essentially different from and incompatible with the Indian way of life.

Given the flashes of excellence in *Custer Died for Your Sins,* one realizes that the book falls far short of its author's potential. We face the 1970s with our understanding of one major American issue enlarged but little by reading the pronouncements of a man capable of speaking with authority and insight.

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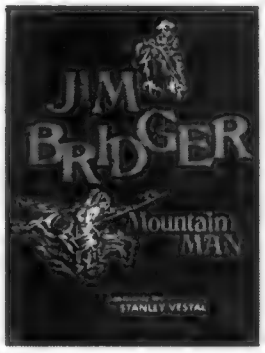

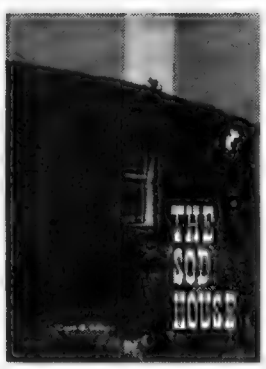

THE SOD HOUSE
By Cass G. Barns

"No one so well knows the life of pioneer settlements," writes Addison E. Sheldon in the foreword to this book, "as the country doctor, the country editor, and the country postmaster." Since Cass G. Barns served in all three capacities during the settlement and frontier years of the Nebraska prairie country lying between the Elkhorn and Loup rivers, it is no wonder that his story "preserves for all future generations a faithful picture of the period and the region." Pa (Bison Book 511)

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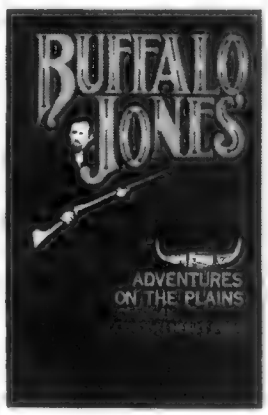
Compiled by Colonel Henry Inman

Charles Jesse Jones (1844-1919) was one of those larger-than-life figures that the Old West specialized in producing; but he was also a paradox—a cowboy and a legislator, a big-game hunter who devoted much of his life to preserving the bison from extinction, and adventurer who was also a city founder. This volume, first published in 1899 as Part I of *Buffalo Jones' Forty Years of Adventure,* is his own story of his young manhood on the plains of Kansas and the Cherokee Strip.

Pa (Bison Book 513)

ISBN 0-8032-5712-0 **$1.95**



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Marching through Montgomery Street

BY ROGER OLMSTED

William Tecumseh Sherman: Gold Rush Banker by Dwight L. Clarke *(California Historical Society, San Francisco, 1969; 446 pp., illus., biblio., appen., notes, index, $9.95).*

IF THE PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED LETTERS of men well represented in the subject index files of metropolitan libraries are usually rather boring accumulations of unrevealing trivia, the least that can be said for the distinguished banker and well known historian Dwight Clarke's presentation of William T. Sherman's correspondence from San Francisco is that it is an exception that justifies digging up old sets of letters and publishing them. Sherman's continuous and detailed notes regarding the business and financial situation in San Francisco during the declining years of the gold rush are an important contribution to the history of the era—and these same notes throw a brilliant and revealing light upon the character of one of the greatest military figures that America has produced.

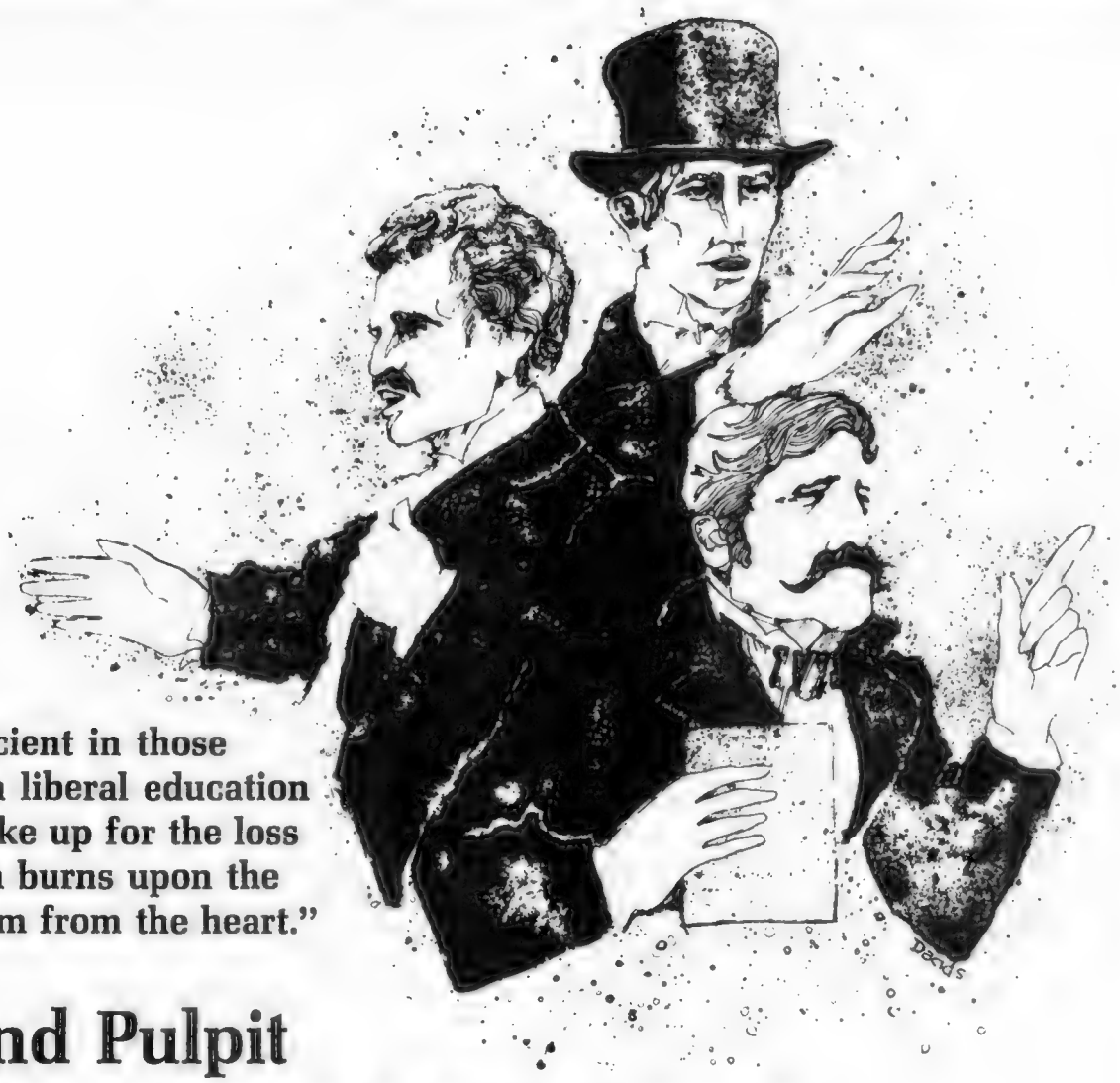
Sherman had been in California with the military government of the Mexican War period. Indeed, he accompanied Colonel Mason on the inspection of the gold discoveries of 1848 and had contributed to the report, presented by President Polk in his State of the Union message, that set the world alive with the desire to pan a fortune out of the Sierra foothills. But Sherman himself had not succumbed to the gold fever. He was a commissary officer at New Orleans in 1852 when Henry Smith Turner, a former Army of the West officer, offered him a partnership in a projected San Francisco affiliate of the St. Louis banking house, Lucas & Simonds. Thus, the future genius of the Union Army, the man who one day was to refuse the presidency of the United States with the dry remark that he would not run if nominated and would not serve if elected found himself in 1853 the resident partner and manager of Lucas, Turner & Co. of San Francisco.

The remarkable strengths and curious weaknesses of both California and William T. Sherman emerge from his "Steamer Day" (biweekly) correspondence with his associate-confidant Henry Turner in St. Louis. The certain greatness and frightful shortcomings of California as a ground for investment are matched by the optimism, caution, and despair that Sherman alternately projected; an ambivalent admiration for the new land is mixed with his own complaints of ill health and probable untimely death.

Above all, there clearly emerges the image of Sherman's great integrity and extreme caution in dealings beyond his own personal goals and interests. This quality of reserved and thorough professionalism (even in his San Francisco career) is apparent in his *Memoirs*—but it is even clearer in this correspondence with his business friend.

Here, the financial disasters and bank panics of 1855 are explained in detail by an "insider" as never before, and it is easier to understand why Sherman's bank weathered the storms. Sherman naturally tended toward a sour view of prospects; hedging his bets to the point where he could stand his losses. He wrote to Turner, "It seems that nobody is proof against this country. The temptation of large profits is the soul of gambling, and business here has partaken of that character." Yet he saw to it that Lucas, Turner was not taken. Again, during the Committee of Vigilance excitement in 1856, Sherman resigned his post as general of the state militia when it was obvious that the law and order faction was powerless and that any military adventurism by the established authority would be not only useless to the cause of constituted authority but most damaging to the bank's reputation.

It was this combination of clear-sighted pessimism and revulsion from personal aggrandizement that may have led to Sherman's future glory: he didn't lose the San Francisco bank when the run broke others; and he had the sense to know that the Civil War was to be won simply by not *losing* it.



"If frontiersmen are deficient in those accomplishments which a liberal education affords to others they make up for the loss in an . . . eloquence which burns upon the lip, because it comes warm from the heart."

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XUM

The One-Man Fiction Factory

BY FEROL EGAN

Max Brand: The Big "Westerner" by Robert Easton *(University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1970; 330 pp., illus., biblio., appen., index, Faust Filmography, $7.95).*

ALMOST AS THOUGH HE TRULY BELIEVED that his own name determined his destiny, Frederick Faust—better known as Max Brand—roared through life like a man possessed. Born of poor parents in California's San Joaquin Valley, orphaned at an early age, this big, brilliant boy was doing a man's work while still dreaming a boy's dreams. Yet even as he worked from dawn to dusk with harvesting crews at haying time, his dreams persisted way beyond the ache of muscles and the knocks of a hard society that made no special provisions for the less fortunate.

Robert Easton's biography of this incredible "King of the Pulps" is a lively and thoroughly documented study that captures the wild spirit of a man who wrote under nineteen other names as he created a prolific fictional world that makes most contemporary writers boneweary even to contemplate. Still, while he was creating such lasting popular fiction as *Destry Rides Again* (1930) and *Calling Dr. Kildare* (1940), he yearned to escape Max Brand—a name made up at a cocktail party—and make his mark as Frederick Faust, classical poet.

Hounded by his passion for poetry and haunted by a fibrillating heart, Faust drove himself with fury. Though he had been told to lead a quiet life, he refused to accept his fate. He even asked his wife to buy him a stethoscope so that he could listen to his heart. It sounded, he said, "like a gasoline engine running out of gas—*put-put, put-put-put*, then a long silence. Then a *put*." But he had no patience with his heart, no time for taking care of it. He was writing and publishing some poetry which his fiction supported; and it was time to go to Italy, time to live in Florence, and time to see all the points on the map of antiquity that a classical poet needed to know firsthand.

In Europe he felt much nearer to all the literature he had read from childhood through his years as a brilliant and lonely student at the University of California—that institution which had refused to grant him his degree because in his writings for the *Daily California* and two campus magazines, he had "satirized faculty and administration dignitaries, sacred cows, sacred codes, and sorority row." He was almost an alien to his California roots, yet he could not escape the American West. Although he wrote more of the mythical than of the real West, the plain fact was that without the West he was only another minor poet on the brink of starvation.

In 1925, he became a client of literary agent Carl Brandt, and ultimately they became close friends. For the first seven years of their relationship, Faust persisted in remaining abroad. All the while, Brandt was trying to get him to come home and meet some publishers. Here, biographer Easton draws a very warm portrait of Brandt frantically trying to get advances for Faust, covering overdrawn checks for him, and trying to contact him in Egypt for the missing page of a manuscript. Easton also points out that this author-agent relationship was based upon the fact that the two men had much in common. "Both had lost fathers early. Both had struggled up the hard way, earning their own living and education, stoking coal, working on farms. Neither had managed to graduate from college. Both enjoyed making money, establishing their influence, and surviving challenging crises. Both drank heavily at times."

Throughout this impressive story about a one-man fiction factory, Easton avoids the easy trap of filling up the pages with facts and figures at the expense of the personalities. So, while the reader is aware of the fantastic production Faust carried on in his short life, all the dimensions of the man are filled out.

In the end, Frederick Faust–Max Brand was much more than how many million words he pounded out with rapid two-finger typing, how many movies and television plays were made from his stories and novels, how unsuccessful he was as a poet, or even how much in character it was that he should die as a war correspondent on an Italian beachhead in World War II. The key to the character of Frederick Faust was that he believed in an American Dream that it has now become fashionable to classify as a nightmare: "Faust was to the writing of his era what Babe Ruth and Red Grange were to sports, Charles Lindbergh to flying, Henry Ford to industry: the expression of an expansive time, when horizons seemed larger and possibilities less limited."

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Treason, Stratagems, and Spoils by William L. Adams, edited by George N. Belknap *(Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1969; 163 pp., $7.50).*

BY DAVID LUNDBERG

IT IS OFTEN SAID that melodrama is the most traditional American literary form. If so, then William Adams' play *Treason, Stratagems, and Spoils* is completely within that tradition. A closet drama which originally appeared in 1852 in the Portland *Oregonian,* this "melodrame," to use Adams' own description, is a wild, woolly Shakespearian burlesque of Oregon territorial politics. The plot, too complex for adequate summary here, involves the competition of the Whigs and Democrats over that perennial problem of western territories: the location of the state capitol.

As a Whig writing in that party's own newspaper, Adams directed his satiric barbs at the Democrats. The play purports to be a behind-the-scenes exposé of their corrupt political maneuvers to have the capitol established at Salem. The main character, a rough synthesis of MacBeth and Coriolanus, is a Machiavellian antihero named the "Judge," who, ironically, as a Democratic politician, has absolute contempt for the people. A bombastic, half-educated overreacher, he is surrounded by Chicopee, a sycophantic sidekick and various other tobacco-chewing cohorts.

Together these characters, all of whom are transparent caricatures of actual persons, rattle the boards spouting outrageous doggerel in styles running from mock-Shakespearian ("Most noble Gumbo, speak your honest mind, / And keep no lurking, tim'rous thought behind.") to mock-epic ("I, *I* will stand on Mt. Hood, and gather / Black tempest clouds, surcharged with dread thunder, . . ."). For those who like the "ring tailed roarer" variety of western humor, this all makes for thoroughly enjoyable reading.

This is not to say, of course, that *Treason, Stratagems, and Spoils* is a lost masterpiece of American literature—a sort of frontier *Moby Dick.* It is, however, a good, rousing piece of satire which provides a picture of western politics worth a thousand pages of historical narrative.

David Lundberg is in the History Department of the University of Calif., Berkeley.

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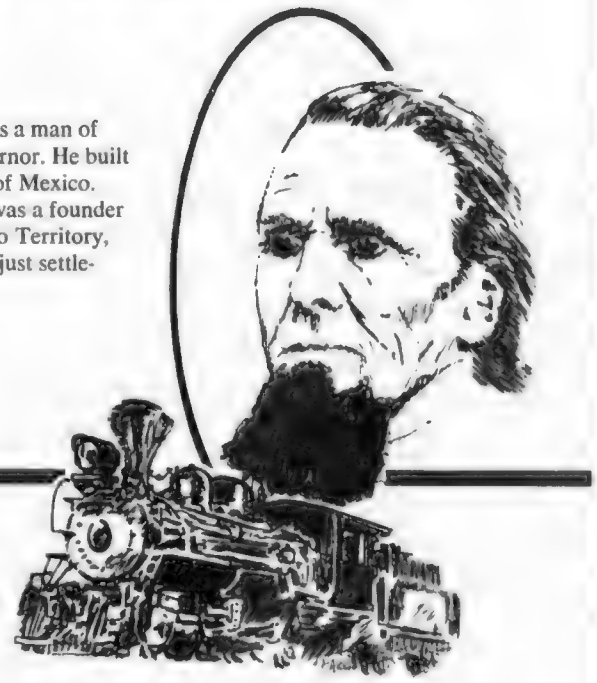

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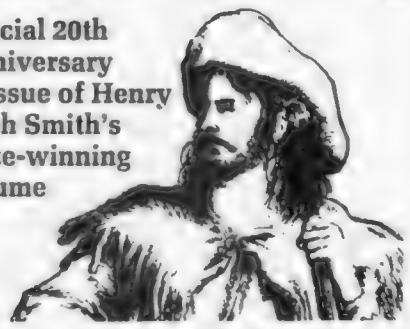

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Strike Them Hard by Robert J. Ege *(Old Army Press, Bellevue, Nebraska, 1970; 146 pp., intro., foreword, illus., appen., $7.00).*

By strict definition, these comments by Don Russell do not represent a review, since the following is, in essence, Russell's introduction to Strike Them Hard. *But the objective observations and the critique transcend run-of-the-mill introductions, qualifying this, in the editor's eye, as an honest, if unique, review.*

BY DON RUSSELL

THE STUDY OF THE INDIAN WARS is regarded by some pseudo-intellectuals as a mild but perhaps harmless form of antiquarianism unrelated to present-day realities, an escapism into the romantic Wild West beloved of Hollywood and television. Yet pundits who would scorn such study declare solemnly that Americans have always been a violent people, citing "our massacre of the American Indians" and "our theft of Indian lands and genocide of Indian tribes."

When Helen Hunt Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor*, her use of "massacre" to describe a half-dozen or so attacks on Indians seemed startling. It had been taken for granted that massacres were *by* Indians, not *of* Indians, Eighty-nine years later massacres by Indians are rarely mentioned, while those entirely ignorant of the subject feel free to denounce the "massacres," "genocide," and "racism" of the Indian wars.

Many regard such misrepresentations of history as unimportant. Yet as these words are written, news reports are dominated by charges of a "massacre" of women and children in Vietnam and of the "murder" by police of armed revolutionaries. Turning back the pages of history a century to the attack on a Piegan village January 23, 1870, by troops commanded by Major Eugene M. Baker, on the Marias River, Montana Territory, there are striking similarities. Then, as today, charges of atrocity, sometimes made by persons in positions of authority, but with no knowledge of the facts, have been widely publicized. Will we ever know, in these modern instances, what really happened? The lesson of history is discouraging.

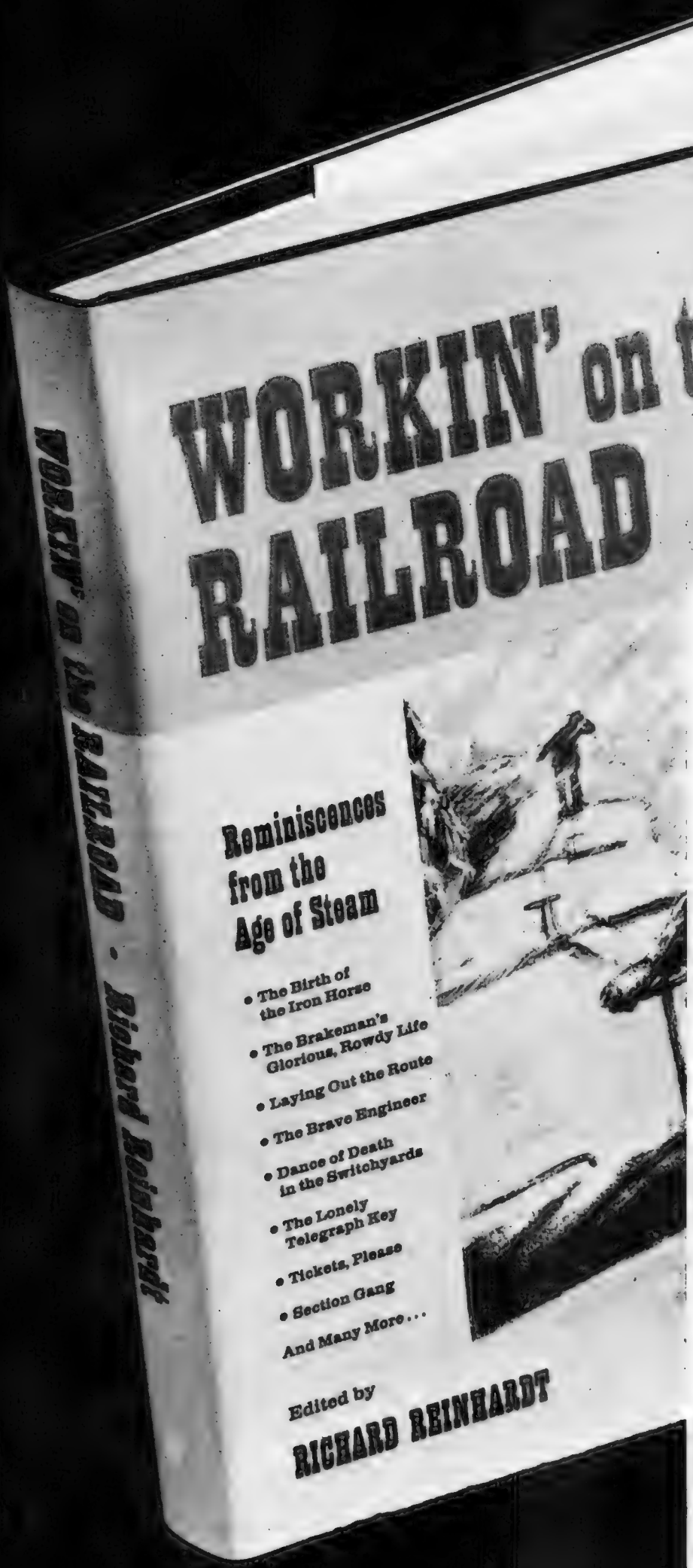
As these words are written, it seems probable that the number of investigating bodies in 1970 will exceed the reported number of victims. Life was simpler in 1870. There was no inquiry. General Sherman and General Sheridan took it for granted that the facts would speak for themselves. Unfortunately they never did.

Robert J. Ege apparently is the first to investigate fully and in depth the charges of "massacre" against Major Baker's troops on the Marias. In my opinion his work is impartial and definitive. For any who disagree, he has produced the full documentation, both pro and con. His conclusions are based on the evidence, and the evidence is there for all to see.

Baker reported that of 173 killed, 120 were warriors and 53 were women and children; also that he took 140 prisoners (women and children) who were later released. Thus there was no slaughter in an undefended village. It was charged that Baker attacked a village of innocent and peaceful Indians, but three of the four chiefs in the village were listed as hostile. Here I will go a bit further than the author does in pointing out that the "friendly" chief Heavy Runner, while he had promised to return stolen livestock and seek out named murderers, had done nothing about it.

Whether such an attack on a village was justified is a question relative to the nature of Indian warfare, little understood then or since. Rarely, if ever, did an entire tribe go to war, whether in defense of its hunting lands or for other motives. Warfare was carried on by small bands of young men for loot and war honors. Their murders and tortures were primitively sadistic rather than the purposeful terrorism of Communist guerrillas. There was nothing in Indian law, custom, or morality that condemned their actions. Rather they were honored for their prowess, whether the victims were white settlers or Indians of enemy tribes. A chief might promise in conference or by signed treaty to stop these depredations, but chiefs, however friendly, had no power to restrain the young warriors.

The Army view was that the only way to stop these hit-and-run raids was to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Richard Reinhardt, whose commentary weaves these stories together with style, wit, and authority, brings to **Workin' on the Railroad** *the kind of expertise and measured affection for the days of steam that was reflected in* **Out West on the Overland Train,** *issued by the American West Publishing Company in 1967. Out West has long since become a railroading classic, and* **Workin' on the Railroad** *will join it on the bookshelves of anyone who cares deeply for the history of America and the West in the days when the steam locomotive was the Great Machine of progress and adventure.*

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hold the village responsible and, as General Sheridan ordered, "strike them hard." Of three hundred horses captured in Major Baker's fight, thirty-five were identified and claimed by citizens from whom they had been stolen, proving that raiders had come from this village.

With these modern overtones of "racism" and "genocide" in mind, it is interesting to note that the site of Major Baker's fight has been confused with the nearby site of a massacre of Cree Indians by Piegan Indians. That the correct site was identified by the author is significant, not only *per se*, but also as a further indication of the painstaking, comprehensive, and objective research by Ege in this small, necessary book.

Don Russell, *a member of the editorial board of* THE AMERICAN WEST, *is editor of* The Brand Book *of the Westerners Chicago Corral.*

Conservation: Now or Never by Nicholas Roosevelt, foreword by author *(Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1970; 248 pp., index, $5.95).*

BY DON GREAME KELLEY

THERE ARE THOSE WHO MIGHT SAY of Nicholas Roosevelt that, as spokesman for conservation today, he belongs too much to yesterday. Worse yet, he is of the elite, to the manor born, not to the grassroots or the streets—and isn't that where the action is now? It is true that this cousin of Theodore Roosevelt has lived, worked, thought, and acted in the heady atmosphere breathed by fellow aristocrats of the conservation movement. They include Theodore Roosevelt, who directed the initial charge on the national forest front, and the man he appointed to lead it, Gifford Pinchot; the first National Park Service director, Stephen T. Mather, and his successor, Horace M. Albright; Sierra Club founder John Muir, and William E. Colby, the club's secretary for forty-four years before he became its president; Madison Grant, Henry Fairfield Osborn, and John C. Merriam, launchers of the Save-the-Redwoods League, and Newton B. Drury who became its "mainspring," was then in turn director of the National Park Service and the California Division of Beaches and Parks, and is once again executive secretary of the League; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his son, Laurance, who have contributed great spirit and imagination as well as vast sums to the cause (if this is *noblesse oblige*, let us have much more of it); and Jay N. ("Ding") Darling, the crusading cartoonist Iowa gave to the nation.

But when Roosevelt speaks, from his ridgetop home near Big Sur, California, it is not to say: "See what we have done, see how we have saved timber and wilderness, wildlife and scenery, for you and posterity." Rather, he has written—and done so with clarity, wit, and forthrightness—to establish some critical lines for present and future action, action by all concerned citizens. Quite directly he states the case for some of conservation's more popular objectives—beautiful surroundings, open space, scenic roads, rural recreation areas—in terms of their worth to all of us. In his foreword he writes: "Even though I am sure that water and air pollution present the greatest threats to the survival of civilization next to the misuse of atomic power, I have omitted them because I lack the technical and legal background to discuss how they can be controlled. . . . I have by-passed problems of urban parks and playgrounds because my contacts with them have been so few." Not all authors stick to what they know, in conservation or elsewhere. Roosevelt's use of the history of accomplishments and failures, and of some chief actors in this history, not only makes good narrative but clearly shows *how*—by economic, political, legal, educational, organizational, and *individual* action—important goals have been, and therefore can be, won.

Among exemplary actions and programs described are Oregon's unique planning of highways in conjunction with scenic and recreational assets; Iowa's setting aside of "parks and recreation areas throughout the entire state because Iowans want them"; the seven county parkland developments of the Twin City Metropolitan Area of Minnesota; some notable scenic restoration achievements in New Hampshire; and the action to preserve California's Monterey coastland in which the author played a signal part, here modestly told. In the area of regional park instigation and funding, "the establishment of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) in 1958 and the

creation of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) by congressional act in 1963 stand out as two major events in the history of conservation. . . . The most important word in both titles is 'outdoor.' . . . [The "back to nature" movement] shows what changes have come about since the westward trek ended with the passing of the frontier. Settlers a century ago sought soil, not scenery."

This is a book for thoughtful modern activists.

Don Greame Kelley *is an associate editor of the American West Publishing Company and former editor of* Pacific Discovery.

The Humor of the American Cowboy by Stan Hoig *(University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1970; 193 pp., preface, illus., paper reprint $1.75).*

BY JON C. BOWER

WESTERN LITERATURE brims with countless volumes concerning the life, adventures, and times of that curious breed, the American cowboy. And all too often he is described as a mirthless hardcase, quick to anger and solitary by nature.

Here is one book that dispels that notion, painting this trademark of the American West as he really was: a fun-loving, hard-working individual for whom a sense of humor was as essential as the horse he rode.

Stan Hoig has compiled a war bag filled with the anecdotes, yarns, and windies with which the range riders managed to ease their hard lives. Hoig has re-created the flavor of these tall tales and hijinks with his authentic cowboy dialogue and realistic descriptions. The reader feels he is there, part and parcel of a tough but wry crew of waddies, exchanging Bunyan-ese stories and imaginative narratives around the flickering campfire. One can almost smell the sage, feel the sweat, taste the sourdough biscuits. He can hear the cattle cry, the cook's call, and the whistling wind across the prairie.

The cowboy led a hard and, in many cases, short but violent life. At any moment a stampede, a falling horse, a swollen river, or the sharp blast from a Colt equalizer might end his lonely career. To dwell on his uncertain tomorrow was one alternative. Another, as Hoig points out, was to laugh.

From sources ranging from interviews with old-timers to the works of Ramon F. Adams, the author has gleaned many heretofore unpublished anecdotes revealing the cowboy's unabashed humor. Perhaps some of the best pieces are those stories he tells on himself, like the complaint of the unfortunate cowboy who, within a single day's time, froze to death, died of the heat, drowned, and died of thirst. Hoig relates, in delightful fashion, the cowboy's running battles with the railroads, his merciless baiting of the hapless tenderfoot, and his defiant treatment of law and order as a practical joke.

It was Hoig's purpose, as he explains in the Preface, to entertain through the natural humor of the American cowboy. He did this, and more. He brought the mirthless myth to life; he added color to his cheeks and a smile to his lips. In a word, he made the cowboy human.

And for the *pièce de resistance* there are drawings by Nick Eggenhofer, adding graphic reality and a zestful touch to the author's lusty writing.

Jon C. Bower *of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is an entertainer and a writer of western history.*

BOOKS IN BRIEF

BY FEROL EGAN

The Wild, Wild West by Peter Lyon *(Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1969; 156 pp., illus., biblio., index, $5.95).*

AMONG THE ENTRIES for debunking the wild West, this one has the quality of "I've heard it all before." Better debunkers than Peter Lyon have long ago shot down the likes of Murieta, Hickok, James, Earp, Masterson, and the Kid. But the art department had a field day with this overblown essay, and this is the best aspect of this venture. The big question about this book is why was it ever published. It offers nothing new, whips the same old horses, and can best be described as something that is simply making more mileage and money out of the very thing it tears apart.

The Boston-Newton Company Venture by Jessie Gould Hannon *(University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1969; 224 pp., endpapers, maps, illus., sources, $6.95).*

WE HAVE PASSED more than 100 dead oxen today and a great many deserted wagons. We struck Carson River at 10 after the hardest day's work that we have ever performed." Thus wrote Charles Gould on September 15, 1849, after the Boston-Newton Company had taken two days to cross the Sink of the Humboldt.

This volume combines the diaries of Charles Gould and David Jackson Staples during their company's overland journey from Boston to California. The author-editor has added fine touches of

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scholarship that round out the picture of this gold rush party of forty young men.

While there was nothing glamorous, nothing wild and woolly about this central overland crossing, it gives a solid picture of what a hard day-after-day job it was to make such a trip. Here is the hard reality of the westward push, and here is the joy of really making it all the way: "Hurrah for California! Here we are all safe, and we don't care whether school keeps or not."

Humbugs and Heroes: A Gallery of California Pioneers by Richard Dillon *(Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1970; 362 pp., illus., index, $7.95).*

HERE IS A BOOK for both general readers and historians to put on the bedstand. In a lively and interesting style Richard Dillon has put together brief chapters about sixty-three California pioneers, infamous and famous. While such typical characters as Black Bart and John Sutter are part of this gallery, there are many others whom readers will be delighted to learn about—characters such as Harry Love, a truly bad *hombre;* Joseph Heco, a shipwrecked Japanese (Hikozo Hamada) who was the first Oriental to become a naturalized citizen; Charles Mallory Hatfield, the rainmaker who gave Southern California more water than it wanted; Ng Poon Chew, the "Chinese Mark Twain" who pioneered in words and wit; and Delilah L. Beasley, the Negro lady journalist who wrote *The Negro Trail Blazers of California.*

Some readers may miss their personal favorites of California's past, but that only indicates the need for another volume or two to go along with this one. If so, it can be hoped that the publisher will use a better grade of paper, darker ink, larger illustrations, and agree to the inclusion of a bibliography or suggested reading list.

The California Syndrome by Neil Morgan *(Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969; 339 pp., foreword, notes, index, $7.95).*

USING HIS FACILE STYLE, Neil Morgan has tried to give readers a view of what makes California and Californians. By any stretch of the imagination, this is one hell of a job to tackle; he should be complimented for having the guts to give it a try, but unfortunately, he didn't manage to break the old girl to a saddle.

For newcomers and outlanders—especially east-of-the-Hudson types—Morgan gives a slick version of a statewide jaunt on a tourist bus. There is a piece of the Mother Lode, a taste of the Sierra Nevada, a sniff of the pollution problems, and a fast sampling of such items as education, agriculture, water, the difference between Los Angeles and San Francisco, politics, the cult of pleasure seekers, the changing makeup of population, and a vague thing called "putty culture."

Readers with considerable knowledge about the Golden State's complicated problems will find this book too much like a series of old newspaper columns loosely strung together. Easterners with limited knowledge will read it and become "experts" on California. Then again, maybe the book was written for that market. . .

The Wyatt Earp Syndrome

(Continued from page 28)

ized, as she dispenses buckets of blood with a straight face and no apology. *Time* magazine was amused: ". . . the violence is imbued with a bigger-than-camp Bonnie and Clyde quality; the stock two-dimensional figures of the familiar western landscape become disfigured here with a three-dimensional reality as limbs are chopped off and buckshot imbeds itself painfully beneath facial skin."

What writer Portis gives us is basically what we get from Robert Kreps—violence so hoked up that it can't be taken seriously. The syndrome has become a gag. And that is where we are at this moment in the revolution in western fiction.

The next step is being taken by none other than the incomparable and irrepressible Leslie Fiedler, who has decided to apply his own very considerable talents to the production, criticism, and analysis of the Western. If his ideas catch on, we are likely to see the "pop" or "camp" Western replaced by the psychedelic Western. I cannot believe that the likes of Leslie Fiedler could possibly remodel in the image of his desire anything as monolithic as the Western. If that should happen, however, it will be the last battle of the revolution, the *ne plus ultra,* for reasons which I will try to make clear.

Mr. Fiedler's treatise on the Western, published in 1968, is called *The Return of the Vanishing American.* It describes the "new western novel" being written by a small group of uninhibited novelists, including Mr. Fiedler himself. It is difficult to summarize *The Return of the Vanishing American* but its major ideas can be isolated. Fiedler's definition of a Western is disarmingly simple: a book with Indians in it. The trouble is that he allows for substitutions. For example take his remarks on Ernest Hemingway:

> . . . looking hard at Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* we discover that certain characters whom he represents as Spanish peasants seem mighty like Montana or Upper Michigan Indians—and consequently he is actually writing, if not quite Westerns, at least crypto-Westerns, since it is the presence of the Indian which defines the mythological West.

Obviously this gives Mr. Fiedler a good deal of freedom. If Hemingway is a Western writer, who isn't? And in defining the West, Fiedler is just as open-minded as he is in defining the Western. He thinks there has always been a West. Even the Greeks had one. It is the place where we go to get away from where we are, specifically from a world where women make us lead toilsome and useful lives. What we want

TO GOLD

(Continued from page 49)

always "superior," often brutal—and sometimes deadly—the forty-niners deserve a massive monument somewhere in the *Bolson de Mapimi* to read *"Yanqui,* go home!" It is a miracle that more stragglers were not picked off by the citizenry, properly outraged by the arrogant conduct of most of the gold-greedy travelers, as well as by Apaches, Comanches, and *ladrones.)*

Finally, there is a bonus for the reader in the verisimilitude of the narrative. Author Egan did not neglect his field work; he huffed and puffed up burro trails, sweated and swatted in sultry San Blas, and ate dust and volcanic ash on the windy high plateau of Mexico, just as the forty-niners did long before him on this forgotten "shortcut" to the mines.

Richard Dillon *is head librarian of the Sutro Library, San Francisco; his latest book is* Humbugs and Heroes: A Gallery of California Pioneers.

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to substitute for the domineering female, he says, is not another woman but a "colored" *man* (Tahitian, Indian, Negro), who can and will be our bosom companion—who will play Chingachgook to our Natty Bumppo. Pocahontas is not what we want at all. This opinion alone will be enough to disqualify Mr. Fiedler in the minds of hard-nosed Western fans, especially when they learn that in the books he recommends most highly, the relationship between the white fugitive and the colored companion may be homosexual.

> A further qualification of Mr. Fiedler's New Western is complete frankness about such matters as sex and syphilis. The desexing of the West (with the consequent loss of a chief possibility of humor in the genre) is of critical importance in the deposition of the Western from the center to the periphery of our literature. Certainly, the de-crabbed, castrated Westerner, that clean, toe-twisting, hat-tipping White Knight embodied finally in Gary Cooper, betrays the truth of American history; and an attempt . . . to recount the opening of the trans-Mississippi West without passion and venereal disease is an unintentional travesty.

Like Robert Kreps, Charles Portis, and the producers of *Cat Ballou,* Fiedler takes the position that the best Westerns make fun of the best Westerns. "Those more sophisticated recent pop novels which play off, for laughs, the seamier side of Western history against its sentimental expurgations are not quite satisfactory. . . . Yet to understand the West as somehow a joke comes a little closer to getting it straight."

Finally, he seriously recommends the use of LSD as a way of understanding the West and appreciating the pop Western. He tells us that there has always been a touch of madness in our pursuit of the western myth and that "it is only a step from thinking of the West as madness to regarding madness as the true West." If we can get this far with Mr. Fiedler, we should be able to go the rest of the way (it is not very far) to the conclusion that the reader has to be a little mad to appreciate the madness of the true West, and that his problem is to acquire madness if he does not have it already. Says Fiedler:

> Obviously not everyone is now prepared, and few of us ever will be, to make a final and total commitment to the Newest West via psychosis; but a kind of tourism into insanity is already possible for those of us not yet ready or able to migrate permanently from the world of reason. We can take, as the New Westerns suggest, what is already popularly called—in the aptest of metaphors—a "trip," an excursion into the unknown with the aid of drugs.

The novels which Fiedler recommends for the LSD crowd would include John Barth's *The Sotweed Factor,* which makes

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bawdy sport of the Pocahontas legend; Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man*, which makes clever fun of the westward expansion; James Leo Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy* (like *True Grit* a successful movie), in which a dishwasher from Houston buys himself some cowboy clothes and finds his true calling as a male prostitute in New York; Ken Keesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the locale of which is a mental institution with a halfbreed Indian cleanup boy as narrator; and Fiedler's own novelette, *The First Spade in the West*, in which a Negro nightclub owner makes the best of his ambiguous situation in a Montana university town.

In each of these except the last, the hero is in flight from the "world of reason" and finds solace in the companionship of non-whites. The WASP heroes of the conventional Western are the villains, or at least the whipping boys, in these stories and the uninhibited discussion of sex, perverted and otherwise, which the Fiedlerian formula requires is present in generous quantities.

But what are these books doing in a discussion of western fiction? If they are Westerns, there is no use talking about the Western as a type anymore. If anything goes, nothing goes. Terms have no meaning when they can mean anything. In Mr. Fiedler's hands the revolution has gone as far as it can by destroying the thing it set out to reform.

The writers of traditional Westerns, of course, will have no part of all of this sound and fury, Krepsian or Fiedlerian. The members of the Western Writers of America believe as they always have. Past President William O. Turner writes in the WWA *Roundup* for April, 1968, as follows:

> The Western Story is an adventure story and its truth is the truth of action and open country and the possibility of a man rising above himself and acting heroically. Because of its roots in American history and tradition it has an essential relationship to the American spirit and hence a potential that has not been fully realized. It sorely needs writers who see this relationship and articulate it for the modern reader.

Nelson Nye, another prolific and prominent member of WWA, delivers himself to this effect in the *Roundup* for June, 1963, speaking of the average reader of Westerns:

> He don't want no part of "history" that isn't history—he never was crazy about history in the first place. All he's hunting is a good, absorbing story of he-man adventure. . . . He don't want to be preached to, harangued at, nagged at, taught, or anything that adds up to discomfort. He wants to be entertained, period.

Messrs. Turner and Nye complete the revolutionary picture. Their attitudes are what the revolutionists are revolting against. As we have seen, the traditionalists are under fire on at least two fronts. On the one hand, the literary sociologists are looking through the western novel at its readers and finding the mental health of these readers precarious in the extreme. On the other hand, the rebellious younger generation of novelists is putting into the western story all the skepticism and ribaldry now prevalent in the non-Western. Both wings burlesque the bloodletting and Victorian squeamishness of the old-fashioned Western and make wicked fun of its conventions.

Can the traditional Western survive this massive assault? Wallace Stegner thinks it can. In an article called "History, Myth, and the Western Writer" (THE AMERICAN WEST, May, 1967) he describes these sagas with interchangeable parts and foolproof formulas as "predictable, serene, and timeless fantasies of self-reliance and aggression . . . apparently good for another century and perhaps forever."

Larry McMurtry is another who thinks that this period of ambiguity will pass. "In time Hollywood will grow tired of parodying the Gunfighter," he says *(In a Narrow Grave*, 1968), "and the ironic will yield to the mythic again."

It would probably be a safe guess that the western novel will be with us for a long time to come; the question is whether it will look the same after this engagement is over.

C. L. Sonnichsen, *professor of English at the University of Texas at El Paso, is a specialist in the fiction of the four-state area he calls the Southwest. He collects it, reads it, and writes about it, but treats it as history. His books include* Roy Bean: Law West of the Pecos *(1943),* Cowboys and Cattle Kings *(1950),* Alias Billy the Kid *(1955),* The Southwest in Life and Literature *(1962),* Outlaw *(1965), and* Pass of the North *(1968).*

A Man, a Place, and a Time

(Continued from page 40)

During December, 1939, and January, 1940, the LaFollette Committee held twenty-eight days of public hearings in California, heard over four hundred witnesses, and prepared a voluminous record. Many theses and dissertations—and several books—have been based on the record of the hearings, and more will be written for it is, in its entirety, a superb social document. But alas, the hearings, which we had worked so hard to bring about, came too late to have much effect. On October 12, 1942, Senator LaFollette presented the committee's recommendations to the Congress, just as sound today as when he presented them and just as badly needed. But by then no one was listening and no one cared, for we were at war.

THROUGHOUT the middle 1930s, in California as elsewhere, the mounting world crisis heightened awareness of the domestic crisis and invested it with dramatic overtones and implications. Steinbeck, vividly aware of the deepening world crisis, responded to it. How could it be otherwise? After all, he was working on *The Grapes of Wrath* during the most agonizing phases of the

crisis that was so clearly and unmistakably bringing us nearer to World War II. The following is an entry from a political notebook I kept at the time, dated March 18, 1938: "How rapidly events swirl around us! 1935 seems a decade ago, and 1934 ages past. We change from month to month, and hour to hour, and everyone keeps wondering when war will start." From the same notebook I am reminded that I spent most of the night of September 25, 1938, with Louis Adamic and Humphrey Cobb, glued to a radio, listening to the disastrous news of what was then happening in Europe. Beyond any doubt, or so it seems to me, the terrible urgency of the times accounts in part for the messianic tone and apocalyptic vision of *The Grapes of Wrath*. In response to a letter sent out by the League of American Writers, Steinbeck replied: "Just returned from a little tour in the agricultural fields of California. We have our own fascist groups out here. They haven't bombed open towns yet but in Salinas last year tear gas was thrown in a Union Hall and through the windows of workingmen's houses. That's rather close, isn't it?"

Two events have come to symbolize for me the end of the 1930s. One was the fall of Madrid on March 29, 1939; the other was the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* a few weeks later on April 16. Steinbeck's novel remains the best attempt, for me at least, to capture the extraordinary ferment of those fervent years of the late 1930s. As Clurman put it, the decade "boomed its farewell salute" with the publication of the novel. The fall of Madrid indicated that it was all over, that we would soon be engulfed in war, and of course we were. I was driving through Salinas en route to San Francisco on September 1, 1939, when I heard on the late afternoon radio news that the Nazis had marched into Poland.

In retrospect the 1930s might best be described as a slight misunderstanding. In the first place, the economy never recovered from the Depression. At the end of the decade industrial production stood at about the same level as in 1929. The recession of 1937 had a dismaying impact on the New Dealers; it was in that year that President Roosevelt reminded us that one-third of the nation was ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished. The chief beneficiaries of the New Deal, as Caroline Bird notes, were farmers, union members, homeowners, and bank depositors. All but the most tentative and experimental New Deal projects—for example, some of those sponsored by the Farm Security Administration—discriminated against migrants, itinerants, domestics, unemployables, farmers too sick or too poor to participate in the subsidy programs, big families on relief, sharecroppers and unorganizable labor; all these categories included many Negroes and Mexican-Americans.

The ferment of the 1930s did not end because of disillusionment with the USSR, although that no doubt was a factor. The upheavals and reforms of the New Deal had begun to level off by 1938, when Roosevelt failed to purge the Dixiecrats in the election of that year but managed to obtain the first major appropriation for the defense program. "The New Deal," writes Robert Goldston, "had not solved the problem of depression—war and preparation for war accomplished that. But as the pall of eleven years of depression lifted from the land, there were few sounds of public rejoicing. All that could be heard as the Depression ended was the summons of the steady drummer; a continuous rolling of the drums now, ever louder, ever nearer. . . . The New Deal reached stalemate in 1938 and was drowned by the war." In California we thought we were bringing the New Deal to the state, at long last, when Olson was elected in 1938; it is just as well, perhaps, that we did not know then that the New Deal was over.

In much the same way, it is a mistake to think of the 1930s as a Red Decade. "A curious law," writes Caroline Bird, "governs the American fear of communism; it says that the perceived size of the Red menace varies inversely with the number of Reds with whom the viewer is acquainted and the distance from Moscow. The fact is that the Marxist parties and movements failed to organize the groups to whom a revolutionary program, one might think, would have maximum appeal. They failed to organize Negroes or Mexican-Americans or the unemployed or the rural poor." The Marxist groups were a factor in stirring the country to political and social consciousness and thus, as Louis Adamic stated, in preparing—unwittingly—the way for the New Deal. But Caroline Bird is right, I feel, in saying that Marxist intellectuals were influential to the extent that they moved everyone just enough to the left for them to see the social significance of decisions traditionally regarded as purely private. But their influence in retrospect has been greatly exaggerated; the "anti-communist ideology" of the postwar period has been far more influential. It was the interlocking of the domestic and the world crisis, not the exhortations of Marxists, that brought about the sense of urgency and tension, the questioning and seeking, the unrest and ferment of the late 1930s. For example, Marxist thinking had little if any influence on Steinbeck. The concern with causes and issues derived, in most cases, from only the most rudimentary and naïve understanding of politics; it was in fact essentially apolitical. The young men of the 1930s, in Clurman's view, were *yearners* seeking a home, a home in the world of thought and action, something that would call forth their most selfless effort. "In the thirties," he writes, "there developed to a high point of consciousness the hunger for a spirtually active world."

This ferment never entirely abated; it was simply drawn into the vortex of World War II. All of the causes of the period, including Spain, became the one big cause of winning the war. "All the protests and affirmations of the anti-Fascists of the Spanish War," writes Stephen Spender, "were now systematized and swallowed up in official government anti-Nazi propaganda, while the anti-Fascists were often rejected from the service, and despised as amateurs now that anti-

fascism had become a professional game." During the war, hopes were centered on the brave new world that would emerge once the war was over. "At the end of a long tunnel," wrote William Barrett, "there was light showing ahead, and beyond that all sorts of horizons opened." But this bright vision never dawned, for we never got to the end of the tunnel. Soon the cold war was in full swing and we found not a brave new world at the tunnel's end but the war in Vietnam.

The fires that burned so brightly—if briefly—in the best days of the 1930s will never be wholly extinguished. Almost a century before Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath*, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *Life Among the Lowly*. The same fire burns in both books, as it does in the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." It is the fire, so to speak, of what Thomas Wolfe once called America's everlasting dream. It has burned throughout our history, faintly and fitfully at times, only to be fanned to a new brightness by some new crisis. These are the apocalyptic moments when the Lord, aroused from his habitual slumbers, decides that the time has come once again to trample out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. We have not seen the last of such crises, nor will the fire ever be extinguished as long as there are those about who, at one time or another, have had a vision of the glory of the coming of the Lord, for it is these recurrent visions that keep the dream alive. And there are many more such Americans about than there appear to be at present, for, in their heart of hearts, most Americans really want to make men free—all men, everywhere.

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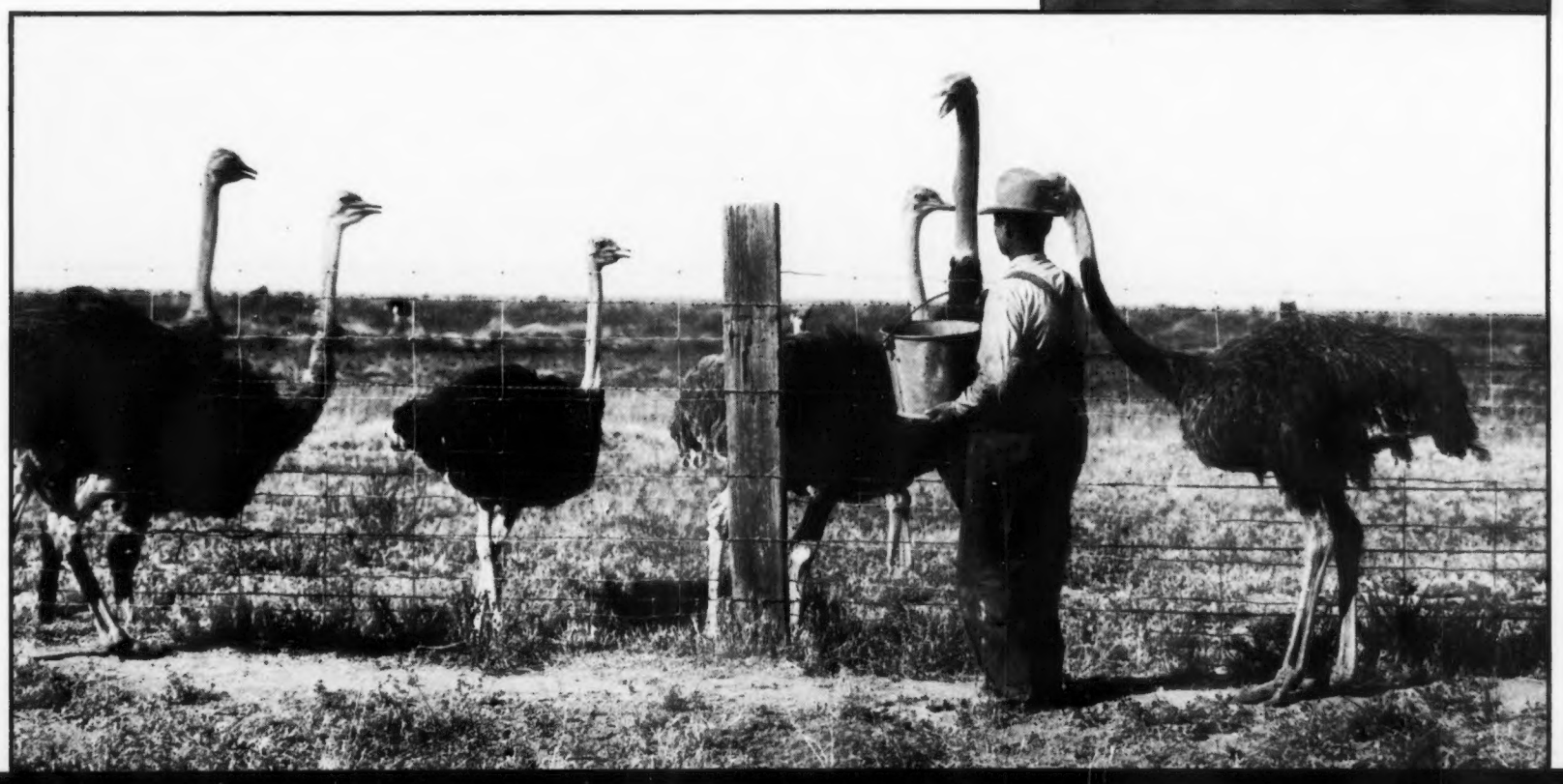
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